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My Heart Sang

by Brendan Boyd

My heart sang.

*My heart sang a compelling song,
Amongst the trees
And during the gloom of night,
My heart sang.*

*There was never a more beautiful song,
There was never a song so enchanting.
I sang of pain and of love, and of loss,
But no one heard me alone under the trees.*

*The leaves on the branches of the trees
Were my comfort.
I sang loud, for the song I sang
Rolled from my heart to my eyes.*

*And I tasted the song.
I tasted the pain,
And the love,
And I swallowed the loss.*

*For loss was the bitterest part
Of the song that rolled
From my heart, to my eyes,
And down my cheeks, to my mouth.*

My heart sang.

My First Love

by Eri Furuhashi

As we continue to grow and mature, we somehow learn to accept the fact that life is ever changing. We come to understand that no one remains the same and nothing lasts forever. Yet still, there are changes that are difficult for us to accept, and there are times when we feel that we are too weak to endure the pain of loss. When I lost the person who most influenced my life, I thought that nothing in the world would ever make sense to me again, and no matter how many new loves enter my life, he still holds onto my heart. The person I lost but cannot forgive is my first love.

I grew up in the city of Tokyo, and in the grade school that I attended, there was a boy named Rei. He was a girly type of boy who wore pink or red clothes most times. He was shy and quiet. He cried whenever I teased him. Every time I called him names, he would tell our teacher and cry for hours. He was the kind of boy I hated the most, but ironically, we were always together because he lived in my neighborhood. I went to his house almost every day to watch TV since my grandfather did not like to have one at our place. Besides watching TV, we also played outside with other children until dinner was cold. I always knew it was time to go home when I would make Rei cry. When he cried, he shouted, "I'm telling my daddy!" and it scared me into going home.

Rei had a father who was a highly esteemed professor of science. Whether he took after his father or not, he developed a love and devotion toward science, especially astronomy. By the time we turned eleven, he had already read hundreds of books about the stars and the universe. I was fascinated by Rei's spirit of inquiry in astronomy, and we often went out to observe the stars at night, sometimes with his father. He taught me how to read stars and told me that Sirius was the brightest star visible to human eyes. I liked to listen to him tell me about stars and his dreams. His dream was to become an astronaut and travel through space. He believed that the time would come when humans would live on the moon, and he promised that he would take me there when we became adults. By this time of his life, he was not a boy who constantly cried. I no longer teased him; I liked him as a best friend.

In rain or shine, we were best friends. Adults told us that we were like finches, birds one should buy in pairs; they cannot survive without their partners. We entered the same junior high school, and after a while, Rei became my first boyfriend. Of course there were times when we had quarrels, but we would soon get back together. I knew his personality well, and there was no one else who knew me better than he did. I believed that we would stay the same forever, but I did not recognize that what we believed was love was too naïve to be true.

Things changed when we went to high school. Rei became one of the most popular boys among the girls and was surrounded by people all the time. Adolescence is a difficult time, a time when people feel awkward and clumsy; their feelings are intense, and hearts are easily broken. It is a time when we experience a great deal of confusion, and we suddenly become different from what we once were. Perhaps I also changed, but the changes in him, in my eyes, were significant. He started to go to many parties with groups that I did not belong to. He began to fail tests in classes, and he no longer spoke about his dreams. We saw each other less and less often, and I felt as if he had gone to a place where I could not reach. The boy who had promised to fly me to the moon was no longer there, and I knew full well that our relationship would come to an end.

Soon, he told me that he wanted to break up with me because he was in love with someone else. When I heard the word "love," I was deeply hurt, yet at the same time, it almost made me laugh. He was wearing name-brand jeans and shirts, hair jell and cologne. At the age of sixteen, with all that created, polished appearance and gestures of emotions, how could he talk about true love? I wondered if I was looking at the same boy as the one who had shared childhood dreams with me. I wondered what had changed him so much, and what had made us grow apart. I was so angry with him for ending our relationship that I wanted to hurt him as he had hurt me. To make him understand what I was feeling, I wanted him to experience the same loneliness. I decided that I would never shed a tear in front of him and would never let him recognize my pain. I told him it was perfectly fine with me if we broke up, that he should know I did not need him. However, I was not sure if I meant those words. Young hearts are so fragile, yet so stubborn.

Rei's life grew wild, and he rebelled violently against parental authority. He leaned toward substance abuse and was involved with the police several times. His parents spoke to me about his behavior whenever they ran in to me on the street. They did not know what was happening to him, nor did they know how to deal with him. There was nothing more painful than to see his mother crying and to hear his father tell me that he wanted to disown Rei. Who would have imagined that the son of a highly respected professor would behave like that? Rei did not go to school much anymore, and he rarely went home.

I saw him in school now and again. He resisted all the people and things around him, but it seemed to have caused him great unhappiness. This popular boy seemed to be slowly losing friends. Whenever I saw him walking the halls, he looked sad and depressed. I felt sympathy for him and wished that I were older. I thought that, if I were an older, mature woman, I might have been able to rescue him from all the ugly things torturing him. I longed to retrieve our old days when he would tell me everything that was in his mind. I wished to mourn our childhood. Yet, the next moment when I saw him with another girl, I would quickly remind myself of the fact that he had abandoned me. The life he was leading now was the one he had chosen. I thought I should no longer

worry about him because I had my own life to live, and by this time, I had been chosen to be an exchange student and was supposed to fly to America the following year. I told myself that I could move on without him.

The line between love and hatred is razor thin. No matter how I decided to forget about him, no matter how I told myself that I did not like him anymore, I could not help but care about where he was heading. I knew he was not the person who I had once trusted, but I wanted to find an answer to the question, "What made him so different?" He had grown up in an affluent family with caring parents, and I always envied him for having such a wonderful family. He was popular in school because of his cleverness. What he was doing now, and how he had changed, to me, seemed both wrong and senseless. I hated knowing that I was not the one to be there for him, but I did not want to play the role of a mother either. I felt as if something was stuck in my mind. I felt as if there was something I should regret; there was something I should be guilty of. For the life of me, I did not know why I still could not forget the boy who had promised to fly me to the moon.

It had been almost a month since the last time he was in school. I waited for him to come to school, but he never showed up again. He died in an accident in which he and his friends had been playing chase on a highway. The accident involved another car, and two innocent people were injured. When I heard this news, I felt numb. There must be a feeling that suited this sort of situation, but I listened to my mother tell me about the accident with my mind wondering aimlessly. It was as though all my senses had become paralyzed. I could not tell what was the truth or a lie, dream or reality. I stayed awake throughout the night and tried to organize my thoughts, but nothing became clear to me.

I did not attend his funeral. My parents said it would be rude to his parents if I did not attend the service, and they tried to force me to go. But I locked my door and refused. I knew it was childish, but I did not want to see anyone or listen to others judge Rei's life or the cause of his death. I did not want to feel the atmosphere of a funeral that would deliver nothing but the realization of the loss. Briefly, I worried about his parents, who would have to endure society's hostile stare, but I did not have the capacity to sympathize with them or share their pain. I basically ran away from everything.

For a while, I avoided communicating with others. Things did not matter to me any longer, and I thought nothing in life would ever really matter or make sense again. All I did after school was stay in my room and watch the stars with the telescope Rei's father had given me. It was the beginning of summer, when Vega, Altair, and Deneb form the summer triangle in the northeast. I focused on Venus, which was shining just below the moon. I no longer remembered when or where Sirius would appear in the sky. Then I thought of Rei, and I felt anger toward him. I was angry at him for not teaching me well enough to remember where Sirius was, for playing silly games with cars, for leaving me, and for all the things he had done. I wanted to be strong, so strong that I would

not be drawn into the loneliness of the night. I wanted to gain more strength and independence so as to be able to live my life alone without tears.

Then I decided not to feel sorry for Rei, the boy who had dumped me and died by his own hand. I decided that I should not rely on my memories of childhood because memories are not our reality. They are illusions that appear in our minds only when we look for a place to escape. Yet I wonder why he still lives in my heart. Every time he comes into my mind, I tell him it is not fair that he still makes me cry. It is not fair that I am the one who always cries. He must come back to me and let me hurt him, let me make him cry. He must come back to make his dream come true and take me to the moon. I no longer need a reason why we grew apart. I just need another chance to blame him, another chance to hold him close because I still deserve it. It was not fair of him to die. As life continues to pass, we realize that it is ever changing. Even when we want to hold on to this moment, even when we experience the pain of loss, life cruelly tells us to move on, as if our feelings do not matter to the world. Yet in this continuous struggle called life, we learn great lessons from the ones we share time with. Things that Rei taught me cannot be written, nor can they be dramatized. The only thing I can write here is that he was the one who made my childhood sweeter, who taught me the warmth and strength of a relationship and its loneliness. When I sense all the loneliness he left in me, I recognize how much I was in love with him.

Jenn Pava



Untitled

by Jillian Harlow

A solitary tear slides slowly,
Down her pale cheek,
As she silently gazes, longingly,
At his retreating back.
Then she crumbles,
Falling on her knees,
Mourning for the one she has lost.
The one light in her darkened life—
Vanquished.
Her heart now empty,
Like her finger, where the ring has been.
Gone forever, all those years of love,
In a moment.

Devin Bousquet



A Necessary Evil

by Alfa S. Joseph

Just as the **weatherman had predicted**, the day had been unbearably hot. There were no **cool breezes to bring relief** to the children playing in the park, and the **sun's rays** had scorched the **blacktop** on the **basketball courts**. **Dusk** came and the **setting** sun illuminated the **sky** with brilliant **shades** of red and orange.

Sharon Bradlee lay on her threadbare sofa in the small apartment that overlooked the park, with a damp washcloth on her forehead. The 13" television was on, but the sound was muted. The E train, heading towards downtown Manhattan, roared past somewhere in the vicinity. She sat up sharply, listening for the tiniest sound that might indicate her 2-month-old son, Nicholas, had been awakened by the noise. Satisfied that he was still asleep, she walked over to the sink for a glass of water and quickly swallowed two Tylenol. The migraine headache she had woken up with had not lessened and had, in fact, intensified as the day had worn on. It didn't help that Nicholas had colic and had not stopped crying until a little over an hour ago.

She walked back to the couch and hit the mute button on the remote. The somber voice of a middle-aged anchorman invaded the silence. He reported on a shooting that had taken place in a Brooklyn McDonald's. The gunman had shot the clerk because he didn't think he had been given enough french fries with his order. Sharon shut off the television. She already had enough to deal with, and what's one more crime in this city? Nothing ever changed. She had learned this the hard way. Sharon thought back to her ex-boyfriend who was always angry. Just about anything could set him into a rage, and he had usually taken his anger out on her. She had never really noticed how abusive he was because she had been drunk most of the time. It wasn't until she had gotten pregnant and quit drinking altogether that she realized the amount of abuse she had been living with. He left not too far along into her second trimester. His reasoning was that a baby would only bring him down, and he quickly moved in with another woman. "Who needs him anyway?" she had stated indignantly.

Three hours had passed since Nicholas' last feeding. He would be waking up at any moment, demanding to be fed. Sharon put a pot of hot water on the stove to heat up and grabbed the formula canister out of the cupboard. She groaned as she realized how light the can felt in her hands. There was only enough left for one more bottle, which meant she would have to make a trip to the grocery store. The thought of showering, getting dressed, packing the diaper bag and waking Nicholas was too much for her to handle. A quick glance at the clock told her that it was 8 o'clock. If she were going to make it to the market before it closed, she would have to leave soon. Dumping the contents of her purse onto the cracked countertop, she found tissues, some old receipts and a wrinkled ten-dollar bill. It would be weeks before she received another government check, and this money would have to last until then. "God, help me?" she prayed silently.

She peeked in on the baby, who was still asleep, and made her way to the bathroom. The light from the bare lightbulb was clouded with dust that had been settling on it before she even moved into the apartment. She summoned up enough energy to brush her teeth, splash warm water on her face and run a brush through her jet-black hair. "This is as good as it gets," she sighed as she looked at her reflection in the fingerprint-smear mirror. Nicholas was still asleep when she looked in on him again. "I'll only be gone a few minutes," she whispered quietly. "Be a good boy and stay asleep." On her bare feet, she padded softly out of the cramped bedroom and grabbed her keys from the bent nail in the wall that served as a key hook. She unlocked the deadbolt and eased the door open as she stepped out into the narrow, pungent hallway.

"That baby of yours has been screaming all day," screamed Miss White as she peeked out of her door.

"So, what do you want me to do, gag him?" Sharon retorted.

"I don't care what you do. Just keep that kid of yours quiet," she shouted as she slammed the door. Not about to have her cranky, old neighbor have the last word, Sharon yelled, "Drop dead, you old witch," and ran down the stairs and out into the humid air.

The question of what she was going to do ran through her head over and over again. She had no money. Her electricity was going to be cut off any day now. She had not eaten a decent meal in days. She had looked through the classifieds every day for the past week and still had not found a job. And even if she did find a job, what would she do with Nicholas? She was so engrossed in her problems that she did not notice she was about to step out into a busy intersection. A horn blared. "Get out of the way. What are you, stupid?" the driver yelled. Sharon could not hold her tears back any longer. Everything was just too much to bear. This was not where she had envisioned she would be at the age of twenty-three. She had been a good student and figured she might go to community college and get a decent job. This idea changed when she met her ex-boyfriend at a party. He was the one who said that she was too uptight and that a drink would be the perfect solution. When they hung out together, all they did was drink and it resulted in her not being able to go to college or get a job that paid enough for her to support herself. She felt stupid for allowing herself to end up this way: addicted to alcohol, poor and with a baby to raise.

The tears had blurred her vision, and as she wiped them away, she saw the flashing neon lights of Discount Liquors. The lights drew her in like a moth to a headlight. Bells jangled as she pushed the glass door inward. The noise startled the older gentleman behind the counter, who looked as if he had had a few too many. The trip to the grocery store was forgotten, and Sharon gazed at the thousands of bottles that lined the shelves. They reminded her of soldiers, all standing at attention.

"Can I help you?" the old man slurred.

Before she could answer, two couples that looked too young to even be

admitted to a PG-13 movie walked into the store. The old man immediately flew out from behind the counter and began shouting obscenities at them. During all of the commotion, Sharon slipped back into one of the aisles. She no longer heard the arguments at the front of the store. All her concentration was focused on the task at hand. She grabbed the nearest bottle and slipped it underneath her shirt. The coldness of the glass shocked her as she made her way towards the door. Small beads of sweat were sliding down her spine and producing a wet spot on the back of her shirt. The man was still ranting and raving as Sharon exited the store with the stolen goods. Sharon was numb with the feelings that flooded and threatened to drown her. She had a blank, faraway look as she ambled in the direction of her apartment.

She was not too far from the store when she began to hear music. She turned in the direction of the music and caught the sounds of someone playing the piano and singing. She kept listening and began to recognize the tune. It was a song that she had heard many times as a child, when her grandmother used to take her to church. The words to the song began to creep up from her memory and she began to hum along. A bench that was within hearing distance of the song seemed to beckon her to rest her weary body. She brushed some pieces of newspaper to one side of the bench and placed the unopened bottle on the ground, beside her feet.

Almost every Sunday, her grandmother would bring her to the big, Baptist church. She liked getting dressed up and seeing her friends in Sunday school. Her teacher was the pastor's wife, and she always wore a hat. After greeting everyone, she would go over to the piano and begin to play. They would sing two or three songs, and sometimes Sharon would get to play the tambourine. Then the teacher would begin to play the opening chords of "His Eye Is on the Sparrow," and everyone would stop singing and just listen to her sing that song. Sharon thought that even the angels in heaven stopped what they were doing to listen to her sing.

Those times had been some of the happiest moments of her life. Sharon listened again and realized that the music had stopped. The crescent-shaped moon hung low in sky, casting shadows everywhere. Sharon looked up into the sky and said, "God, if you're really out there, I need your help. I want better for my son. I don't want him to see me as a drunk. I want to be there for my son, to teach him right from wrong and be able to give him all of the things he needs. Grandma always said that You worked in mysterious ways. So all I'm asking is for You to make a way for me to be a good mom to my son. Thank You."

As she lifted her head, she actually felt better. She had a feeling that things would be different. She did not know how, but she knew that things were about to change and nothing would be the same. She looked across the street and the temperature flashed up on the digital screen in front of the Citibank. It was soon replaced with the time that read 9:53. Sharon froze. "That can't be right," she said to herself. A bus plastered with an ad showing a couple smiling and hold-

ing a bottle of Absolut Vodka, pulled up at the corner to her left, with a screech. The door opened and an elderly woman stepped out along with two teenage boys. The last passenger to get off was a woman. She made her way slowly down the narrow steps carrying a stroller. She missed the last step and the stroller came down on all four wheels with a thud. A loud wail came from the infant that had just been rudely awakened from a deep sleep. The woman peered into the stroller, checking to see if her baby was okay. She lifted him out and held him close to her, while whispering soft words of reassurance. The baby's cries snapped Sharon out her comatose state, and she gasped as she realized that she had left Nicholas home alone for almost two hours.

Sharon quickened her pace to a run as she tried to get back to the apartment. Her thoughts were consumed with images of Nicholas. All she wanted to do was get back home to him. The sound of a siren interrupted her thoughts. A police car with lights flashing sped past her. She followed it as it traveled ahead of her, then lost it as it sharply turned a corner. Sharon turned around as the sound of even more sirens came from behind her. Two fire engines raced past her followed by an ambulance and two more police cars. As Sharon turned around, people started emerging from nearby apartment buildings. It wasn't unusual in this neighborhood to hear sirens on any given night, but something was different. A boy who could not have been over ten years old came running towards her. He saw all the people standing outside and shouted to no one in particular, "A building's on fire. Smoke is comin' out of all the windows. You gotta see this." Sharon's throat tightened and her heart pounded deep inside the walls of her chest. Her mind focused on one thought; she had to get home to her son.

The crowd began to drift toward the direction that the little boy had come from. Sharon pushed her way through the crowd and ran toward her building. As she turned the same corner that the police car had taken earlier, her worst fears were realized. There before her, stood her apartment, engulfed in flames. The boy's description had been correct, and smoke was coming out of the top floor windows. A larger crowd than the one behind her was gathered in front of the building and across the street. A police barricade had been put in front of the crowd, and behind it police officers and other emergency technicians were working feverishly to help the victims who were piling out of the burning building in droves. Sharon pushed through the crowd and made it to the barricades. She attempted to slide the barrier from in front of her, but was stopped by an officer. "Ma'am, you can't come back here," he shouted over the chaos. Undeterred by the officer's statement, Sharon proceeded to move the barricade. Grabbing a hold of Sharon's arm, the officer repeated his statement more forcefully.

"Get your hands off me," Sharon screamed. "My son's in there." Sharon began to shake uncontrollably.

"Ma'am," the officer said sliding closer to her, "I understand, but we are doin' all we can. I can't have you runnin' around back here." Sharon only partly heard what he had said. Like snapshots, the events of the day came rushing back into her mind. Nicholas' scrunched face wet with tears, the two Tylenol she had taken,

the reporter on the television, the pot she had put on the stove to make Nicholas' bottle. "Oh my God," she thought to herself, "I never turned off the stove."

She looked all around her into a sea of strangers, whose faces held looks of shock, fear and disbelief. Sharon sunk to the ground as the sobs racked her body. She had no doubt that her son was dead and that it was her fault. One by one the crowd's attention was drawn to Sharon's wails that competed with the wails of the still howling sirens. The crowd backed away from her and began talking back and forth and casting backward glances at her. An EMT stooped down and touched her arm. Sharon jerked her arm away and sat up. She looked the technician in the eyes and said, "My son, my baby, was in there." The EMT accompanied by a police officer helped Sharon to her feet and brought her away from the crowd.

"Is there anyone you can call? Do you have any family?" the officer asked with genuine concern.

Before she could answer, she heard a familiar voice in the background. "I don't need no help. I'm fine," the person yelled. Sharon turned towards the voice. Though her back was turned, she could tell it was her horrible neighbor, Miss White, who stood beside an ambulance refusing the offer of a quick check-up. Sharon forced her legs to move in her direction. What would she say to her, she wondered? Would the old lady even care that she had just lost her son?

As her neighbor turned around, Sharon could see that she was holding something. She strained to see what it was. Miss White looked up and caught Sharon's stare. Sharon froze. Miss White made her way slowly towards Sharon. When she was within one foot of her, she stopped. Sharon could clearly see that Miss White was holding Nicholas. Fresh tears rolled down Sharon's face. Miss White came closer and placed the infant in his mother's arms and then put her arm on Sharon's shoulder.

"How did you..." Sharon started to ask.

"It don't matter how. Everything's fine now. Everyone's safe," Miss White interrupted.

"But if it wasn't for you, my son would be dead. I messed up so bad. How can I ever thank you enough?"

"Honey, I don't need no thanks. I did what any decent person woulda done. But I do want you to promise me one thing,"

"Anything and it's yours."

"You've got a second chance now. Don't take it for granted."

Sharon nodded and looked down at her son, who was sound asleep. She kissed him on the forehead and then brushed away the tears that had fallen on her face. Together the two women turned and continued to watch in silence as the tiny apartment building burned to the ground.

The Legendary Hangover

by Kelly Stevens

List of Characters

The Anheuser-Busch Gang: An all-American gang. It has been fighting over the city of Milwaukee for many years with the Foreigners, who have developed ghettos across their land.

Bud: The head honcho of the Anheuser-Busch Gang. He's everybody's buddy, and he's an American legend. He is also known world wide.

Mickey-Lobe: A Yankee straight from the Bronx. He is missing his left ear from a bar fight, and carries a golf club for protection.

Doctor Otis: Well, he's not really a doctor, but he sure can heal stab wounds and is one hell of a bartender.

Gov'na Busch: Used to be a big shot in Texas but is now president of some country western fan club.

O' Doul: The only Irishman I know who doesn't drink. I don't blame him; he misplaced his liver and still can't find it. He's the designated driver of the gang.

BoDean: He's a mellow, twisted man from Kentucky. He doesn't do much drinking, but he loves his iced tea.

Cider Jack: One crazy dude from Ohio who is upset about his pet woodchuck running away.

Old Scratch: He's a dirty old man from Aspen. He has a constant itch and knows his way through the Rockies.

Sammy: He is a noble man who has fought for gang member's rights in Congress. He is a true Patriot.

The Foreigners: This group of foreign invaders has settled in the city of Milwaukee and caused nothing but trouble. They have established a ghetto on the west side of the city and have fought with the Anheuser-Busch gang for power.

Foster: One tough Aussie. He uses a boomerang in combat and wears tight alligator skin pants with no shirt.

Killian: An Irishman who rides a red painted horse through Milwaukee. People think he's nuts, but he doesn't care.

Beck: He's a German man who thinks he's a musician. He's practically a one-man band who uses two turn tables and a microphone.

St. Pauli Girl: She's the Foreigners' tramp from Bremen, Germany. She has reproduced with all the gang members.

Brotha Amstel: An Amsterdamian who loves to party. He carries a glass pipe wherever he goes.

Tecate and Corona Hermanos: These brothers are straight from Tijuana. They broke out of a Mexican prison after being arrested for narcotics and weapons, and fled to Milwaukee.

Heiny: A Dutchman from Holland who dresses in the color green.

Labatt: Labatt is a lumberjack from Canada. He has been deported from his homeland because he has killed so many endangered woodpeckers.

Squirmin' Herman: A drunken tequila worm. Most of the time he doesn't know where he is, and no one understands how he fell into this gang.

The Hard Licker Biker Gang: The Hard Lickers are a biker gang from Laconia, New Hampshire. They're the Hells' Angels of the East Coast. They were passing through Milwaukee and decided to stay for a while.

Señor Cuervo: A Hispanic rebel without a cause. He never removes his shades and rides the front hog in his fleet.

Ron Bacardi: Ron has no hair on his head, but he has a long red mustache. He supplies all the weapons for the gang.

The Captain: The Captain believes he's a pirate from Margaritaville. It's hard to ride a bike with a pegged leg but he manages.

Old Grand Dad: He's one of the elders of the gang. At night, he tells the Hard Lickers stories of old times at the campfires. He has a fluffy white beard, rides the largest bike, and is approximately 90 years old.

Jackie D: The great nephew of Old Grand Dad. He's a very strong, rough dude although he is 17 and the youngest member of the gang.

Gordon: Gordon is probably the most intelligent member of the gang but has a 30-martini-a-day habit that has made him retarded. His fellow bikers won't let him ride by himself because of his alcoholism, so he usually rides with the Captain. He wears a boar's head with tusks as a helmet.

Johnny Walker: An American Indian whom the bikers kidnapped when he was an infant. He is now a gang member and is very spiritual.

Bailey Jameson: Another Irishman. He left his wife and nine kids behind in Orlando during his mid-life crisis to follow his dream of riding motorcycles. He has a leprechaun tattooed on his chest and drinks black coffee.

Sam Buka: Born in Rome, this black man has repaired and built most of the Harleys in the gang. A Honda Goldwing is his bike of choice.

Seven: An All-American kid, born on the 4th of July. He is the seventh child in his family, the Seagrams, and took off with the Hard Lickers when he was nine after his elementary school exploded.

The Gods: The Gods lead the path for the gangs to make peace.

Bon Scott: God of Thunder and deceased lead singer of AC/DC.

Willie Nelson: God of "Keepin it Real" and "Life on the Road."

Homer: God of all Beers. Famous Quotes: "Beer is the Answer," and "No TV and no Beer make Homer go crazy!"

Jimmy Buffet: Jimmy is a parrot head. He is wasted away again in Margaritaville, searchin' for his lost shaker of salt. Some people claim that there's a woman to blame, but he knows it's his own damn fault.

The Porcelain God: The God that everyone prays to for forgiveness when they have a major hangover.

The Legendary Hangover

Once upon a time, a gang called the Anheuser-Busch gang controlled the city of Milwaukee. Before the gang came to Milwaukee, the city was in great turmoil because they were supposed to be voting for a new mayor and city council, but no one liked who was running for office. On the day of the election, the Milwaukians went to work and stopped by the bar, but no one showed up to vote. What was the city going to do? They had no one to run their city! The Milwaukians prayed to the gods for guidance, and Willie Nelson appeared. The Milwaukians were confused; Willie Nelson was still alive and still on tour?

"Why is Willie here?" they all asked.

"I am Willie Nelson, and yes I am still alive and on tour, but I have been promoted into a god. I am now the God of "Keepin' It Real" and "Life on the Road." How can I assist you partner?"

"Oh Willie, we have a major problem. We have a bunch of candidates running for office that do not understand the working citizen, and we need some help because we don't know what to do. Any ideas?"

"Oh yeah, this is simple. Nominate the Anheuser-Busch Gang as your city council. They have always tried to help the city and have never asked anything of you."

"Gee thanks, Willie. You are one smart country singer."

"You're welcome. You know, keepin' it real after all these years has really helped my intelligence."

The Milwaukians decided to nominate the Anheuser-Busch Gang as their city council, and everything was good. The whole gang was sworn into office, and they all pledged to be responsible gang members and to do mostly good for their city. Bud, Mickey-Lobe, Doctor Otis, Gov'na Busch, O'Doul, BoDean, Cider Jack, Old Scratch, and Sammy of the A-B Gang took the oath. Bud was pronounced the Mayor of the city because he was the most knowledgeable about politics. Gov'na Busch was elected as his assistant because, after all, he

was the president of the country western music fan club. And Sammy became treasurer because he was trustworthy and also a fine gentleman. The city of Milwaukee was slowly becoming restored. Everything was going well. The city was doing so well under their new government that people started moving into Milwaukee and having families. Actually the city provided much hope for working families because there were all types of jobs and a lot of land to settle in. Unfortunately, all good things have to come to an end. A group of foreign invaders began to settle in the area and started drinking a lot of beer and raising hell. The immigrants established a ghetto on the west side of the city. After getting well acquainted with each other in the ghetto, a gang was formed. They called themselves the "Foreigners."

An Aussie named Foster, who was known for his boomerang combat and tight alligator pants with no shirt, decided to get the Foreigners to terrorize the city. He became angry with many of the Milwaukians because they told him he was overweight and needed to put some clothes on. He was very insulted by this and told his friends that the city didn't appreciate newcomers. He rounded up a group of the toughest outlanders he could find and told them they would serve justice in the city. Foster initiated Killian from Ireland, Beck from Germany, St. Pauli Girl from Germany, Brotha Amstel from Holland, El Hermanos de Tecate and Corona from Mexico, Heiny from Holland, Labatt from Canada, and Squirmin Herman from... well, we don't know where into his group of vigilantes.

Foster talked the gang into thinking that the people of the city hated them (which they did), and he started a mission to destroy Milwaukee. Labatt started by cutting down the telephone poles with his giant axe. Labatt had been deported from Canada because he had killed some endangered woodpeckers in the wilderness while lumberjacking. Killian began riding his red painted horse through town, kicking over peoples' trash cans, which made the citizens, garbage men, and pedestrians really mad. The citizens were angry because their trashcans had been dented, the garbage men quit their jobs because there was a big mess, and pedestrians were stepping in the horse dung. Beck began riding through town in his low rider blaring loud music. And to top off all the monotony, Brotha Amstel was driving his Hemp Van around town blowing out marijuana smoke through the exhaust. The whole city was filled with smoke. The Milwaukians were becoming upset with all the commotion in the city and demanded that the city council do something about it. The gang decided to take some action. But how?

They decided that they should talk it out with the Foreigners, so they arranged a meeting at the Icehouse on White Castle Avenue. It would take Milwaukee's best to stop this feud. Both gangs sat down and tried to settle their differences at the Icehouse while having a couple rounds of beverages. By the end, they butted heads and tried to stop thinking. Thinking got them nowhere; neither did concentrating. They finally figured out that they would have to resolve their problems with violence.

The War of Milwaukee started around 2 p.m., and the fighting lasted a long time. Mickey Lobe began swinging around his golf club, and by the time he had hit nine or ten of them, they were all smashed. When this happened Foster got ticked off, whipped his boomerang around, and wasted a couple of gang members with five or six shots. Then, Labatt took affirmative action and started cutting off people's limbs. These guys were sooo... drunk, they couldn't feel their legs, arms, or any other parts of their bodies. By the end, both gangs were hurting and decided to make peace. Not one gang member was able to walk home by 8 p.m., so O' Doul made the decision to drive everyone home.

The gangs decided that, after 2 days rest, they would make a peace offering with each other. Once again, they met at the Icehouse. When they arrived, the Foreigners saw that they had forgotten about Squirmin' Herman. The silly tequila worm had passed out under the table all that time ago and still hadn't woken up. To make peace, Foster offered their only woman, St. Pauli Girl, to the Anheuser-Busch Gang, so they could reproduce and make the gangs become one united family. BoDean offered to share some of his twisted iced tea with the foreigners, and they really enjoyed it. The Foreigners gave Cider Jack a red dog when they learned that his woodchuck had run away. Old Scratch decided to show his new friends how to tap dance to the ways of the Rockies. To conclude the offerings, Brotha Amstel introduced to the gangs a ritual used back in Amsterdam to cleanse the mind and spirit. When they were done with the celebration, Doctor Otis healed all wounds with sweet lemons and rubbing alcohol.

Everything was all good and well with the city of Milwaukee again. Both gangs were getting along. They were actually starting new families and interbreeding. St. Pauli Girl was getting a lot of attention, and Milwaukee was flourishing. But once again, all good things had to come to an end.

A god arrived to bring them news. 'I am the god Jimmy Buffett, and I am "wasted away again in Margaritaville, searchin' for my lost shaker of salt. Some people claim that there's a woman to blame, but I know. But I know it's my own damn fault.'" Now that my song is over I have to warn you, Milwaukee, the Hard Lickers' are coming to town, and there's going to be trouble,' he told them.

"What ever do you mean, Parrothead?" asked Bud and Foster at the same time.

"I mean there is more trouble coming to town. A biker gang from Laconia. Be ready for them. I gotta go and meet up with the reefers at a different latitude, but take care and good luck."

"Thanks, Jimmy!" exclaimed both men.

Jimmy had been right; there was trouble coming to town. The Hard Licker Biker Gang was headed towards Milwaukee and planing to stay for a while. The gang stopped into town around 9pm (no one knew exactly when, but around then) and didn't intend to leave until at least 1am. They arrived in a loud

uproar and a lot of smoke. By this time the Anheuser-Busch Gang and the Foreigners were getting old, beginning to settle down and were raising families. They really didn't want to hear loud noises. The gang pulled up in front of Bud's home and started yelling for Bud to come outside. Bud came outside and he saw what the whole commotion was about.

"Excuse me, are you the Bud I've heard so much about?" asked Señor Cuervo, the leader of the pack.

"What have you heard and I'll tell ya?" Bud replied.

"I've heard about this big shot, Bud. He supposed to be some kinda of an American legend, and he's everybody's buddy," said Cuervo.

"Yeah, I'm that Bud. Whaaas Up!!" responded the legend.

"I think you stink man! Where I come from, nobody likes you. Prepare to die," threatened the angry Mexican.

"Why man? Chill out. What's wrong?" he asked.

"Some guy told me that some Buddy poured sugar in my gas tank, and you're the only Buddy I know. Prepare to die," said Señor Cuervo as he shot Bud in the head.

Bud was dead, and the city was once again in turmoil. Senor Cuervo, Ron Bacardi, the Captain, Old Grand Dad, Jackie D, Gordon, Johnny Walker, Bailey Jameson, Sam Buka, and Seven took over the city council, and the Milwaukians were very afraid. Motorcycles covered every road of the city, naked women were running around everywhere, and litter and pollution covered the roads. There were bottles, cans, and kegs on top of all sorts of trash. The city's people were in desperate need of help and once again prayed to their gods.

Suddenly the great god Homer appeared and said noble words. "Beer is the answer!!!"

"Oh my god, Homer is finally right about something," the Milwaukians said. "If we make our own beer, we can probably get rid of all the Hard Lickers, and we won't be hung over every morning. But we will need to make a lot of it. Maybe our founding fathers, the Anhueser-Busch Gang and the Foreigners will help.

And that's what happened. All the factories were shut down in the city and were transformed into beer refineries. All the people of Milwaukee started making beer, and soon enough, there was more than enough beer for everyone. Sammy helped the beer companies become established, and Heine suggested that beer bottles shouldn't be brown, but green.

The Milwaukians told the Hard Lickers' that they wanted them out of town and told them they had enough beer in the city to do it. The gangs set up another meeting at the Icehouse and tried to settle peacefully, but it ended up in another violent uproar. They began fighting again, and worse than ever. Johnny

Walker was shooting men with a bow and arrow, Tecate and Corona whipped out their guns and started bangin' out heads. Sam Buka took out his mechanic tools and got people hammered. Brotha Amstel lit up a doob and stood in the corner, so he wouldn't get hurt. The Captain used his only foot to kick, then fell on the ground and started booting. Seven ended the fighting by lighting a small bomb in the corner, and everyone got toasted.

By 2 a.m., the fighting was over. The three gangs came together, mixed, and ended up having major hangovers by the end of the morning. After the fight, everyone was wasted and prayed to the Porcelain God for forgiveness. The next morning all the gangs agreed to get along and share the city. Bailey decided to treat all the gang members to a nice cup of coffee that morning, and they all decided that they should make a tradition out of last night's event to remind themselves of how much they cared about each other. They decided that the whole country should reenact that battle every Friday and Saturday night. And if you are in college, add in Thursday nights. Gordon suggested that people should reenact the event every holiday with martinis, gin and tonics, and purple passions to remind themselves of how much they love each other. Seven liked that idea and said that the 4th of July should be celebrated the same way, but with explosives. Old Grand Dad also enjoyed that thought, and suggested they continue the tradition with campfires, stories and summer nights.

And the god Bon Scott said something very important:

"Partying all the time is cool and all, but stick to it only on holidays, summer nights, and weekends or you'll end up like me, either hung over or dead. Trust me, I am the god of Thunder. I toured with AC/DC for 15 years. I know all about partying."

And that is how hangovers came to be.

*Turn out the lights, the party's over
They say all good things must end
Let's call it a night, the party's over
And tomorrow starts the same thing all over again*

Willie

Varsity Dreams

by Aaron Gettings

My whole life I dreamed of playing varsity basketball for my high school. I would play for hours a day at my playground, imagining I was wearing the orange and black uniform of my team. I would imagine that our team was down by two points with three seconds left in the championship game, and that it would be up to me to hit the game winning three-pointer at the buzzer (I usually did, and if I missed, it was always because I was fouled). In reality, I had never played any form of organized basketball in my life, and there is a simple reason for this—lack of self-confidence. I had never done anything to be proud of, and I had no reason to believe that I was good at anything.

During the seventh grade, I tried out for the middle school basketball team, and I was the last person to get cut. That means that if anyone were to quit the team, I would be able to take his place; no one quit. This crushed me because I felt that if I was not good enough to make the seventh grade team, then basketball was just something else to add to the pile of things I was mediocre at. This did not prevent me from playing, though. I loved basketball and played it more after being cut than I did before, but I no longer realistically thought that I would play for our school.

Every day I was still out on the court, most days by myself, shooting that buzzer-beating three-pointer. Even though I had lost hope of playing for my school, I still wanted it as badly as ever. I would still imagine that I was wearing the black and orange and that everyone in the crowd was chanting my name. Although I still had the dream, I did not think about trying out again until my senior year. During high school, I had many friends who were on the team, and for the past few years, they had been trying to convince me to try out, but I always felt that I wasn't good enough.

During my senior year, right from the beginning of school, they started trying to convince me to try out. It seemed as if everyone had gotten together in a group effort to get me to be a member of the team that year. They had been making sure that I played with them instead of staying at my own court by myself, and when I was playing with them, they always tried to coach me and tell me what I was doing that the coach wouldn't like. "You have to bend your knees more on defense, because Polechetti will yell at you for that." "Always fake passes when you have the ball; never keep it still because it will get stolen, and Polechetti will pull you out of the game." "When you get the ball down low, never dribble! Polechetti hates that!"

I was seriously considering trying out that year, because it would be my last chance. One of my friends, Chris, who was also the captain, began asking me what number I wanted. He knew I wanted number 33 because of Larry Bird, but that was his number. He suggested 32, which was Kevin McHale's number and

awfully close. Talking to him about what number I would be wearing really got me excited about being a part of the team, and everyone on the team constantly telling me that they felt I was good enough instilled some confidence.

I had known the coach since eighth grade, and I happened to have him as a teacher my senior year. He was always trying to recruit people and convince them to try out for the team. From the day I walked into the classroom, he began commenting on how tall I had become, and he was referring to me as "Reggie" because people had informed him that I had a three-point shot like Reggie Miller. The coach's interest gave me more confidence than anything. My friends obviously wanted me on the team, but they were my friends, and I expected them to want that. But the coach only wants what's best for his team, and the fact that he thought I would be best for his team really meant a lot to me. With everyone on the team backing me up and the coach obviously wanting me to try out for the team, I decided to go for it.

Everyone on the team knew that the coach had begun referring to me as "Reggie," so when I walked into the first day of try-outs wearing my Reggie Miller jersey, everyone got a kick out of it. The try-outs were a little rough, but after two weeks of more exercise than I had gotten in my previous seventeen years of existence I was officially a member of the Fredonia Hillbillies. The coach had never officially said, "Aaron, you are now a member of the basketball team," but I remember the point when I realized it as clearly as any memory inside my head. The coach called the team into the locker room after practice. We gathered around him, and he told us he was handing out uniforms today. I remember trying to hide my excitement, so I wouldn't look like a little kid sitting underneath the Christmas tree, but there was no way to wipe the gigantic smile off of my face. It must have been pretty obvious, because everyone was laughing at me and congratulating me. The first uniform the coach pulled out of the box was number 33. Chris smiled at me and took it. The next number was number 32. The coach asked, "Who wants 32?" I literally jumped up and said, "I do!" Everyone laughed at me, including the coach, and after a few seconds of me staring at him, he chuckled, "Then come on and get it!" I grabbed the uniform from his hands, pulled it over my shirt, and looked into a mirror. It had to be the proudest moment of my life. I feel that when I am on my deathbed and I look back on my life, my three proudest moments will be the births of my kids, graduating from college, and putting on that uniform.

I knew that since I had never been coached before and really had no knowledge of basketball other than standing behind the three-point line, that my playing time would be pretty limited. I didn't mind though. I just loved finally being part of the team that I had dreamed of for so many years. I could now say that my dream had become a reality.

Our team was very good, and on most nights I sat on the bench in my number 32 jersey watching our team take a 15- to 30-point lead before the coach would call me in the game with a few minutes remaining. Since I was good

friends with everyone on the team and I had never played before, they always tried to get me to score. Whenever I entered the game, they would pass me the ball on every play trying to get me to shoot. They wanted me to just throw up a shot every time I received the ball, regardless of whether I was open or not. I had other intentions—trying to play the best I could so that the coach would give me more opportunities to play. This isn't to say that I didn't use many of those opportunities to score, as I did put up and miss a number of shots, but I did not take as many as they would have liked.

On the team I was what you could consider the crowd favorite. I can't say that it is a tradition at my school, as I am sure it is the same all over the country, but for as long as I can remember, there was always one person on the team who rarely played, and he was always the player that the crowd rooted for and cheered for, even if he wasn't playing. I was this man. During every game, the cheerleaders and the fans would chant, "We want Gettings!" or, "Put in Gettings!" or a number of variations of that. On a few occasions when the coach placed me in the game after a long period of chanting for just that, I would literally receive standing ovations from the crowd for just entering the game. Although the crowd was just trying to help, all they did was make me nervous. When they began chanting, I knew that within a minute or two the coach would call me to the end of the bench to give me a few instructions before placing me in the game. I was so nervous that I would get sweaty palms, and I remember that during our first game on my first play, I was so nervous and my hands were so wet that when the ball was passed to me, it slipped right through my hands and out of bounds. I think it is safe to list that as the most embarrassing moment in my life. The crowd also seemed to want me to score as badly as the team did. Whenever I shot the ball, they would all start cheering, and when the shot did not go in, they would all sigh, "Awwwww..." in unison.

On one day, towards the middle of the season, we were going to be playing a very bad team that night, and I knew we would win the game by a considerable amount. Thus, I knew that I would be getting a lot of playing time, most likely more than I had received all year. The whole day in school, people were telling me that tonight would finally be the night. They had me convinced. We had played the team once before during this season, away, and at that time I felt I would be getting a lot of playing time and possibly score. I did not get into that game though, as our team played so badly, the game went down to the end, and we only won by a handful of points. Our team got a strict reprimand for that game, and I knew that this time we would not let the game be close.

Before I left my house for the game on this particular night, I informed my parents that I wanted them to go to this game because I felt that I was finally going to score. They had gone to almost every home game, but I had never played much, scored, or did anything remotely impressive once I was in the game, and they were getting tired of sitting through a whole game of basketball to watch me run back and forth for two minutes. On this night they had other

plans and told me that they wouldn't be attending, but that they would tape it off the TV (our games were broadcast on public access), in case I did score, so that they wouldn't miss it. I was kind of upset, but I understood.

In the locker room before the game, the coach asked me in the huddle, "Aaron, are you going to score tonight?"

"I hope so," I replied. He told me that he had seen my mom at a gas station right before he came to the game, and she had told him that I had a feeling I was going to score that night. I knew that he was planning on playing me a lot, and that he wanted me to score just as badly as the team did, so I was very confident that I would get plenty of opportunities to score.

The game had gone as I expected, and with seven minutes left in the game we were winning by an insurmountable amount. The coach pulled me to the end of the bench and told me that I was going in the game. As I ran on to the court he called out, "Aaron! Make sure you fake your passes!"

Since the only thing I can do on a basketball court is shoot, the coach had designed a play for me where I could get an almost-guaranteed wide-open three-point shot if it was executed right. It was an in-bounds play, where I would run past screens to the corner of the court and the player in-bounding the ball would pass it to me. We had tried the play twice. On the first attempt, the player in-bounding the ball passed it out of bounds. The second time we tried it, my shot went in and out, and I heard the familiar "Awww..." roaring from the crowd behind me. I knew that they wanted me to score and were waiting for it to happen that night. I did not want to disappoint them.

We had been playing for a long time, but we had no idea how much time was left. I remember getting a steal underneath the other team's basket and getting the ball knocked away by an opponent. The ball rolled out of bounds underneath the other team's basket, and I got the ball from the ref and in-bounded it to our point guard. He began dribbling the ball down the court, and I ran down to my position at the three-point line. As I was nearing the line he passed the ball to me. In one motion, I caught the ball and shot it. I remember seeing the ball swish in the net and then the sound of the crowd rushing over me like a tidal wave. I didn't want to celebrate because I knew our coach didn't like that, so I began to get back on defense. As quickly as I had turned around to head to the other side of the court, I heard whistles, so I turned back around. The refs were running towards us waving their arms and blowing their whistles.

The crowd was still louder than ever (actually the loudest it had been all year), and all I could think of was that the refs were trying to quiet the crowd down. I was wrong. What had really happened was that the crowd was so loud, we couldn't hear the buzzer signaling the end of the game. I remember the point guard coming up to me and putting his arm around me, then all the team and the crowd coming on to the court to congratulate me. I had accomplished one of my dreams.

What is a dream? To me a dream is one step from a fantasy, something that although possible, is almost certain not to happen. That night I accomplished the near impossible.

After the game one of my teammates gave me a ride home, and I remember him telling me, "It gets no better than making a buzzer-beating three-pointer." I protested that it can be beaten by making a game-winning buzzer-beating three-pointer. He laughed and replied, "But still, that's a once-in-a-lifetime thing that almost never happens, but it happened to you." All I could think about were my days at the playground pretending to make that buzzer-beating three-pointer, except this time I wasn't fouled.



Series by Shilo Ellis

Things fall apart

by Sean Lynch

I have seen all these faces before...
Flashing in my head frame by frame.
Just how I left them there, standing by the lake
As I turned to walk away.
Those secrets told where only the water listens will die there.
Long I sought and found the friends who will never be replaced.
And who knew we were this strong?
She said it, or did he?
Sleeping under the stars, I now know it need not have been said.
Spoken with a glance and sealed with the kiss of a profit.
"Things fall apart," I lightly whisper,
Reminiscing of that summer.
The memories burn long and sweet,
Like fire in midwinter,
And die with the first sign of light.



Nicholas Stephans

Temptations

by Sean Lynch

We dance in the moonlight,
Faces pale as ghosts
Showing on the altar.
God looks down with his silly grin
Laughing at our imperfection.
Human life given and taken.
The blood on our hands drips,
Mixed with the wine of Christ, tells our future
We walk alone, not knowing what lies ahead on this path.
We suffer, we live, we hurt.
We try our best and fall short,
Like Icarus.
His arrogance draws a perpetual path,
Calling our bluffs and pointing to the battle before us.
Take a sip, quench your thirst, temptation.
With a heartbeat we prove vitality.
We take it for granted for we know no better.
Basking in our conceit we challenge one another.
To brazen the risk means to make one's self vulnerable.
And vulnerability is weakness.
The simplicity of a word...
The sincerity of a kiss...
Is the temptation to love.

Coffee Cup

by Brendan Boyd

My hands hug the warm cup as I sip and let the warm liquid swim through my body. The feeling makes my eyes roll upward as I lick the remaining drops off of my upper lip. A sense of relief comes over me as I lower the steaming cup from my mouth. I glance through the frosty window of the café. Outside is a different world compared to the inside of the café. I watch the cold air sweep through the city streets causing problems for passing pedestrians. Happy not to be one of them, I bathe in the warmth of the café. I remove the wool hat that protects my head from the falling snow. I brush a thin layer of frost off it, but my head is still damp from the moisture that seems to seep through. My hands ache though I wrap them around the hot cup. The pain shows through my rough and filthy skin. I button up the remaining buttons on my coat. The zipper broke long ago, and now all I have are the few buttons that enable it to stay together. A nonchalant glance exposes the age of my coat and its vulnerability to stand a chance in the blistering cold. It is easy not to concentrate on this misfortune, but others can't help it. Inside their heads they say, "What's he doing in here?" They know not of what my misfortunes truly are. They go home and cover up in their warm down comforters. I, on the other hand, only have this dirty, damp, foul smelling coat that serves as my bed and protection from the cold. I haven't come in here to be criticized; simply, I have come for a cup of coffee. I might say something, but they'll only see me as another crazy on the street. Maybe I am crazy. Hell, I should let them know how I feel. Maybe I should just finish my cup of coffee. Let them think what they want.

I bring the cup close to my face and glance inside to see how much coffee is actually left. The cup is no longer hot in my hands; it is fading warmth and the coffee sits low in the cup. I drink the last of it, but this sip doesn't give me the same sensation as the first; it never does. I put my damp hat back on and take the empty cup with me as I walk toward the doors. I know people are staring, but I don't care. I leave the warmth of the café and enter the harsh, winter weather. I walk down the sidewalk about ten feet and position myself against the café wall. My hands shake from the near freezing conditions, but I still manage to raise one hand to hold the empty cup. I tremble as countless chills trickle down my spine. I know what I have to do; my behavior has become as consistent as the sun rising in the morning to give everyday light. Still my jaw shakes as I manage to speak, and I stumble over my words.

It wasn't always like this; I was forced to cope with things, and I dealt with them the best way I knew how. Both a sunny afternoon and my friend Harrison accompanied me home from school. The long day seemed to make our arrival home overdue. The school bus had let us off at the corner of my street, and our walk home seemed steadily influenced by a sense of urgency. When we reached my house, it seemed very unusual that Harrison didn't enter with me. See, he always came over after to school, but I guess it was just coincidental that his mother wanted him home right after school, something about neglecting his chores the night before. So our usual afternoon consumed with video games and junk food didn't occur on this particular day. I entered my home through a cracked front door. The core of the apartment was cold; maybe it was because

the windows were open, or maybe it was because my mother was lying on the floor in tears that seemed to make a small puddle around her. I approached her urgently, and soon realized why she was crying. My father's body was planted on the coach; there were three visible bullet holes in his mechanic jacket. Two of the holes were through his heart, the other pierced the patch on his jacket; the only letters that remained were P-H-I-L-I. The bullet had taken off the last letter, P. I couldn't cry though, I just crouched next to my mother, to hold and console her. I was twelve when this happened.

The next two weeks went by with the speed of molasses. I managed however to conjure up some information about the tragic event. See, my father had leaked some information to them pigs (that's how my mother put it), and a few guys down the block had got locked away for a long time. The hit on my father was payback. Now I don't know what my father said to them pigs, but I do know that they always seemed to wrestle my father for information about the block. I recall my mother mentioning something about parole and them pigs pushing up on my father because of it.

So it was just my mother and me; she had become very protective. She constantly harassed me about coming straight home after school and coming in the house as soon as the streetlights flickered on. I didn't put any additional stress on her about it though. I figured her forty-plus hours a week at the laundromat was enough.

Entering the eighth grade made Harrison and me feel like grownups. Graduation from junior high awaited us in just a few months. We, however, were so involved in playing basketball and meeting girls that the thought of leaving school rarely crept into our minds. It had been almost a year since my father's passing, and my mother was still suffering from the funeral costs and other expenses that remained. Over dinner she mentioned taking on a second job to attack the debt we were in. She started a job as a third-shift clerk at a twenty-four-hour convenience store, two towns over. She kept babbling about how she was giving me the responsibility of being home alone. This basically entailed me washing my clothes, doing my homework, preparing my clothes for each school day, and heating up dinner in the microwave that she would so diligently prepare every morning before she went to her first job. I did not speak though my casual body language accepted. It wasn't anything I couldn't handle. She knew that; besides I wasn't going to give her any additional stress. So I became mister independent in the eighth grade. I just spent most of my time with Harrison so I wouldn't feel alone.

Graduation wasn't looming anymore because it was now two weeks away. Harrison and I secured our place in the whole graduation process and had already been fitted for our gowns and caps. We were the class of 1999, the last junior high class of the millennium. My mother was so happy for me. She was mentioning taking pictures and relatives coming to see the ceremony. She had already secured a whole day off from her first job, so she was going to finish up her shift at the convenience store, then meet me at school. The night before

graduation, Harrison had slept over. My mother was at the over night job fulfilling the last obligation that would ensure her the day off to spend with me. We stayed up the whole night reminiscing about our three years at school and what things to expect once we got to high school. See, we had already planned it out. We were going to the same high school and were going to play basketball together. Our long conversation led us both into a non-conscious state, and before we knew it, morning was upon us.

I can't recall a happier moment in my life than the morning of my graduation from junior high. My hair was cut, my clothes pressed and my graduation get-up was draped upon me with such confidence and assurance. When my name was called and I walked across the stage to accept my junior high diploma, my happiness turned to confusion because I couldn't see my mother anywhere. The last child in my class was called to receive his work, and there was still no indication of my mother. I didn't even notice the ceremony being over, I stayed still in my seat. Almost fifteen minutes had passed when I realized that people had filed out. Harrison and his parents found their way over to me and despite their smothering chants of congratulations, I did notice footsteps getting closer to me. It was one of them pigs whose hesitation in his stride gave an indication of why he was reluctant to relay information to Harrison's parents. See, the convenience store had been robbed in the early morning and my mother was shot and killed. I was thirteen when this happened.

Just trying to get through the summer was a task, but Harrison's parents were more than happy to extend their home and love in my direction. A month later, Harrison's parents received an acceptance letter for Harrison to attend a private high school. The news came as much as a surprise to Harrison as it did to me. We were both under the impression that we were going to attend the same school in the fall, but having Harrison accepted to the private school changed all of that. For the first time, I actually took a moment to think about my reality; an only child whose mother and father had been murdered, and now my best friend would not be attending the same school as me. I felt truly alone. Since the private school that Harrison was going to attend was a boarding school, he had to leave two weeks before I started school, so he could get situated. I was beginning to break down inside. I had feelings about my past locked away in my heart, which I had never dealt with. I didn't feel comfortable talking about my feelings to anyone, not even Harrison. That's why, when he left for school, I felt more frustrated. I knew that I should have said something to him, but I just couldn't. I didn't know how to bring up my thoughts and feelings about my mother and father. Honestly I just felt so bad for myself, I started pretending that they were still alive, and eventually I believed that.

I wasn't focused on school at all; that's why I ended up dropping out before the year was over. After about four months of school, I had had enough and decided that I wasn't going back. School wasn't the only place that I left astray. I never went back to stay at Harrison's home. I adapted nomadic traits and became accustomed to begging. I lost the little self-confidence that I had and

gave up hope trying to pull myself out of this misfortune. Time progressed steadily, and before I knew it a year had passed. Still with nowhere to go and no one to rely on, the scavenger that I had become soon found comfort in a small café.

My hands hug the warm cup as I sip and let the warm liquid swim through my body. The feeling makes my eyes roll upward as I lick the remaining drops off of my upper lip. A sense of relief comes over me as I lower the steaming cup from my mouth. I glance through the frosty window of the café. Outside is a different world compared to the inside of the café. I watch the cold air sweep through the city streets causing problems for passing pedestrians. Happy not to be one of them, I bathe in the warmth of the café. I remove the wool hat that protects my head from the falling snow. I brush a thin layer of frost off it, but my head is still damp from the moisture that seems to seep through. My hands ache though I wrap them around the hot cup. The pain in them shows through my rough and filthy skin. I button up the remaining buttons on my coat. The zipper broke long ago, and now all I have are the few buttons that enable it to stay together. A nonchalant glance exposes the age of my coat and its vulnerability to stand a chance in the blistering cold. It is easy not to concentrate on this misfortune, but others can't help it. Inside their heads they say, "What's he doing in here?" They know not of what my misfortunes truly are. They go home and cover up in their warm down comforters. I, on the other hand, only have this dirty, damp, foul smelling coat that serves as my bed and protection from the cold. I haven't come in here to be criticized; simply, I have come for a cup of coffee. I might say something, but they'll only see me as another crazy on the street. Maybe I am crazy. Hell, I should let them know how I feel. Maybe I should just finish my cup of coffee. Let them think what they want.

I bring the cup close to my face and glance inside to see how much coffee is actually left. The cup is no longer hot in my hands; it is fading warmth and the coffee sits low in the cup. I drink the last of it, but this sip doesn't give me the same sensation as the first; it never does. I put my damp hat back on and take the empty cup with me as I walk toward the doors. I know people are staring, but I don't care. I leave the warmth of the café and enter the harsh, winter weather. I walk down the sidewalk about ten feet and position myself against the café wall. My hands shake from the near freezing conditions, but I still manage to raise one hand to hold the empty cup. I tremble as countless chills trickle down my spine. I know what I have to do; my behavior has become as consistent as the sun rising in the morning to give everyday light. Still my jaw shakes as I manage to speak, and I stumble over my words... "Ca, ca, can ya, you spare some change for a cup of coffee?"

The voice on the receiving end of my compliance was one that seemed to prevent the chills from continuing to trickle down my spine. It was a voice I vaguely remembered but would never forget.

"Yes, I happen to have some change," he said.

I looked up as he extended his hand towards mine. When my eyes finally positioned themselves on his face, tears rolled down my cheeks and became frozen to mine. Harrison lifted me to my feet, put his arm around me and we slowly walked down the street.

Why I Gave Up Coffee . . .

by Kirstin Davidson

When I was young, I thought my so-called talent was what set me apart from everyone else. It wasn't until I got to high school that I realized everyone fancied himself or herself a poet at some point. It was my passion for writing and my supposed talent at it that set me apart from my peers in school. It wasn't that I felt superior. I just didn't know how to relate to them.

The athletes played sports and spoke only to one another, while the theatre group was almost impenetrable. That was tough to deal with, their rejection. I felt for sure that they would want someone who loved what they performed as much as they loved performing it. When they found out I was terrified of the stage and had no interest in lights, I was all but asked to leave.

As far as I knew, I was the closest thing to a writer my school had. Knowing that, I felt it was my duty to make myself known somehow. The newspaper didn't want me because my articles bordered on sentimental and were far too opinionated. Even the editorial page was too strict for what I wrote. All I wanted was to write my poems and short stories and actually have my peers read them.

So my sophomore year of school, I printed a publication of sorts and slipped two hundred of them into people's lockers. I pretty much gave up on humanity when I discovered one hundred and ninety-four copies on the floor and in different garbage cans.

From then on it was all or nothing. I stopped trying to include myself in what they deemed important and withdrew to my world of words and pretty images printed on pages of thick paper. Even knowing that the other six were still floating around offered me no solace.

I brought home the good grades, so my father barely noticed how unhappy I was. As long as I got into college, he didn't care. I was a little too dark for his tastes, so we didn't relate well with one another. I spent a lot of time in front of my computer or with my head plunged into a thick hard-cover book. As long as I looked okay, then I was.

My mother was an English teacher, and for as long as I could remember she had drilled the necessity of being articulate into my head.

"Angela, nothing is more important in this world than being able to speak your mind," she used to tell me.

I was in the third grade when she passed away. My dad was never really the same after that. I liked to think that I reminded him too much of her, and that's where his distance came from. Maybe I was just vain in thinking that.

I thought the most beautiful things about my mother were her words. When I was fifteen, I found her old journals in the basement. Most were unreadable from age and years of weathering the seasons. One clear thing I remember

was that when talking about my father, she called him one of the most intelligent and respectful men she had ever met. He didn't even try to hold her hand until their second month of dating. She also said he shared nothing in common with her, but something about his eyes made her forget that fact. I looked into my father's eyes after that day, and I saw such emptiness there that it was obvious where that light had come from.

I felt it was always important to have a clear picture of how a writer's beginnings influenced what she'd become. Those journals were the only sure thing I had. I started my own book the next day and wrote a poem for every bad or good thing that occurred. I used them as a way of documenting my life.

After graduation, I moved out of the house right away. My father was more than eager to get me out of his sight, and I got accepted to a pretty good liberal arts school in Boston.

Years of isolation made the move extremely easy. I didn't expect to make friends and so when I did, I couldn't help but revel in the newfound companionship. I met people in classes who were so in tune with my thoughts and expectations that I couldn't help but feel relieved. In class, however, I still felt out of place. As my peers stood and read their pieces, I became more and more frustrated with my own. I had almost no range, at least nowhere near as much as they did.

I still lived for afternoons alone amidst the hustle and bustle, completely insignificant and forgotten. I had an appointment in Harvard Square with a friend from my poetry class. We were going to share some writing and catch a movie. Unfortunately I timed the outing wrong and had almost two hours to kill when I stepped off the T. I walked into the first café I saw.

I'd never gone to that particular coffee shop before. It always seemed a little too upscale for me. Their prices were high and the customer base was much different than my usual stomping grounds.

He was sitting alone in the corner. I noticed him right away as I looked for an empty table, coffee in hand. I did a juggling act and shuffled over to the one next to his, plunking my belongings onto the hard surface with a thump.

He looked up and smiled. His eyebrows almost met each other in the middle when his mouth curled up. He leaned back in his chair and looked down into his cup. His dark hair fell over his forehead, perfectly in place, and he clung to that cup with such deep authority, it was as if he were daring it to spill on his perfectly white shirt.

I became lost in thought almost immediately and couldn't tear my eyes off of him. He was the complete opposite of me in every way; I could see that right away. He had probably spent more money on his shirt than I had on all my books that semester. I could picture him walking through life with his head held high, but unpretentiously.

I quickly looked down at my dirty hands and felt a sense of shame for even **daydreaming** about **someone like him**. I felt such disappointment as I stared at the **patterns** that **work had left on my hands**.

His were perfect—long and clean with no care left on them. I **thought** he must have **played piano or something equally delicate**. They fell straight **against his face** as **he held his head off the table**.

I quickly took my book out and scribbled the first thing that came into my head.

"Eyes Dark Unyielding
Penetrating my own.
Breath is caught
And I share his
Sweet smell forever,
At least in my mind."

Finished, I regained my **reflection** of his **features**. He **looked** up to notice my gaze falling gently on his. **Another** smile **crept** upon his **face**, this one more **inviting**. He **opened his mouth** as if to **speak** when his **date flew** in, **late** but **beautiful**. She **fluttered up to him** and he **rose to meet** her, **face grim** but **welcoming none the less**.

"You're here," he said, monotone. "I was beginning to wonder if you'd ever show up."

She laughed gently and kissed his cheek. "Oh, Paul, don't be dull. You're better than that. I had a meeting that ran late."

She **sat** quickly, folding her leg over the other and removing her coat **thoughtfully**.

"Ah, all **better**," he murmured, **sarcasm still** in his **voice though** his tone lowered. His **smile** was quick and **somewhat forced** for **her expense**.

I tried to **keep** from **listening** but found it hard to keep from staring at her expensive **suit and manicured fingers**.

"Envious thoughts
Not of what you have
But what you are."

My writing was interrupted by a loud, throaty groan from their direction.

"So, this is why it was so **important** that I **get** here so **promptly**. You certainly didn't waste any time, **did you?**" she **growled** through **gritted teeth**.

"I've wasted way too much time the last couple years, Christine," he said calmly, his eyes flashing.

"Four, Paul, four years. How can you do this now? Who do you think you are?"

"Someone who deserves better than sitting alone in a coffee shop for an hour waiting for his partner to show up. I don't even like coffee!"

"My meeting..." she started.

"Yeah, I know. It ran late. I hear this almost every day. I thought by now you would at least have come up with a new excuse."

"Excuse! I don't need an excuse. My career has always been the first thing in my mind. You knew that in the beginning."

"I just thought I'd get a fraction of it. I was wrong. So it's time to move on. For both of us."

"I've treated you better than anyone I've ever been with," she seethed, leaning in closer to him.

"Well, that's not good enough."

"You're awfully calm considering what you're doing. How long have you been planning this?"

"Christine, don't be dramatic. It doesn't suit you."

"You're going to regret this."

"Perhaps, but I don't right now. Not at all," he said, picking up his coffee before dismissing it again.

With that she stood and stormed out, perfect blond hair flying and heels making a loud crack on the linoleum surface.

I tore my eyes from their table and looked down at my page.

"The bird has flown"

I glanced up quickly and saw him lean back in his chair, relief flooding his dark eyes. He turned to me quickly and said, "Are you happy?"

"What?" The shock that he had spoken to me at all blocked my mind from absorbing any of what he'd said.

"Are you happy?" he repeated, shifting his chair to face my table.

"No," I said quietly, closing my book.

"Why not?"

"Because I'll never be as talented as my mother."

"How so?"

"She wrote so beautifully that even after she died, I had a piece of her left with me. I think sometimes that I'll never be that way."

"I should have known. I asked Christine the same question a week ago and

her answer was equally asinine, though yours is a step up. She said yes, and when I asked her why, she said she'd gotten the deal of the century, and that was it."

"You shouldn't trivialize her feelings like that. Maybe it was the success that made her so happy. Mine is the antithesis of that."

"The reason I was so disappointed in what she said was that she missed the point entirely. She mistook a philosophical question and resorted to such simplicity, I felt stupid for ever asking in the first place. That was one of my major issues with her. She was top of her class in law school, a brilliant woman and she missed everything I said. And what am I? I'm practically a bum. I failed out of four top undergraduate programs before finally finishing at some second rate school. So, you have the can't-live-up-to-Mommy syndrome, huh?"

"Excuse me," I said, looking him roughly in the eyes. They were wide with amusement and he stood then, crossing to my table.

"What I mean is that you aren't exactly alone in this problem. I know at least a half a dozen other people who gave similar answers. I must say, it doesn't get any easier to hear that same dreadful response. I guess anything's better than the one that Christine supplied." He walked back to his table and grabbed his coat, draping it across his arm. "Nice chatting with you but I have some things..."

"Wait a second. I don't think you've treated me fairly at all. You have no idea the background..."

"I don't need to. I hear the same thing every time. 'I was mistreated.' 'No one liked me.'"

"What made you so mean?"

He tossed his coat over the chair next to mine and sat across from me. "How long have you been away from home?"

"I moved out this past July."

"So that's what? Four months. Yeah, I'm sure things did suck when you were growing up. Daddy couldn't stand the sight of you, could he? Things like that don't make you as unhappy as you say you are. It's far too complex. Whatever it is, it's broad and much more general than that."

"Okay, great philosopher, are you happy?" I asked, leaning in closer, my eyes flashing with as much intensity as his own did.

"I thought I'd be when I reached this point in my life."

"That doesn't answer the question."

"Well, if you'd let me give my intro, I'm getting to it. When I was ten I wanted to be a ballet dancer."

"If you're not even going to be serious for a minute then you might as well just leave..." I started, looking away from him.

"No joke. My grandmother took me to see "The Nutcracker" and afterwards I begged my father to let me take lessons. My sisters were all much older than I and had each taken lessons when they were my age, so I felt it was only fair that I should be able to. My father wasn't exactly thrilled. He was the picture of masculinity. He'd never really fit in with my mother's money. Needless to say, he detested the idea of me becoming a ballerina. Well, not a ballerina exactly. This isn't that kind of a story." He paused then and leaned back in his seat.

"So did he let you?" I asked, trying not to quiver under his hard gaze.

"Yeah, after weeks of begging. I thought he would cry but he went out and bought me my first pair of spandex tights."

"Where is this all going?" I said, uncomfortable with not knowing.

"Okay, the abridged version. I gave it up in high school because I was afraid of embarrassing the hell out of him. He never got used to the idea and he didn't support me at all."

"That's it then. 'You could have been a contender.' Life isn't some God-damn movie. And my answer was disappointing?"

"I told you it was something simpler. It's a moment, not a concept. Do you remember the last time you were really happy? I mean, fucking glowing."

"Yeah."

"And do you remember what it was that took that all away?"

"Yeah."

"I bet it wasn't your mother's death either."

"No."

"So..." he said, sitting the chair forward again, the same amusement caught in his eyes.

"I found my mother's old journals and poetry books when I was in high school. I loved every word that was written in them and I couldn't believe they weren't published. I made it my duty to have them be heard, and so I copied the ones I thought were especially good and passed them out in school."

"Yeah..."

"I found them all after second period spread throughout the halls. They just brushed these beautiful words away as if they meant nothing."

"There you go. I bet that whole book of yours is filled with empathy for your

mother like it was your loss when they passed over her work. Did you ever think that maybe the only reason you wanted to write was to make up for her failure?"

I was stunned completely silent. He grinned, a look of satisfaction overcoming his usually dark features. He was more right than he even knew. Every page, before the one filled with thoughts of him, was how I felt because of that day. Nothing she had written was any good, and mine were probably even worse because they were nothing but a repeat of what she had felt. He stood up then and picked up his coat.

"It was great meeting you... I never got your name."

"Angela."

"I'm Paul. I must say this is one of the best conversations I've had in a while. Sorry it started out so harsh."

By that point I wasn't even listening to him. His eyes looked condescendingly at me. I stood then too and picked up my purse, hastily exiting. I heard him behind me yell that I had forgotten my book, but I didn't even look back. There were too many things I had to get ready for. On the top of the list was sorting through everything this stranger had just made me realize.

I got about a block before I stopped running. I felt like an idiot. I had been a lot of things throughout my whole life, but I had never before considered myself so stupid. Brains were the only thing I had ever had. I clung to them with everything I had, and now they were gone also.

I sat on the first bench I saw. The crowds of people flew by and my dazed eyes barely noticed when someone sat next to me and flung an arm around my shoulders.

"I really have never gotten that kind of reaction from anyone I've ever asked."

I looked up and saw Paul grinning down at me. He looked huge next to me as I sat under the weight of his arm.

"Do you get off on ruining people's lives?" I asked pulling away from him and standing up.

"I hardly think that I've ruined your life..."

"You don't know me! How can you presume to know what will hurt me and what won't? That was everything I..."

"Stop! Think about what you're saying. You can move on from this and be a hundred times better off than you were before you walked into that coffee shop. I pointed out a fact. Mind you, I was wrong in the delivery but my intent was not to hurt you. I don't know you. I don't exactly walk around the city looking for sad looking girls."

"Done?"

"Not yet. I feel bad about how things went down. That's why I'm here. That is why I ran after you and brought you this." He reached into his bag and pulled out my book of poetry. "It's not the worst I've ever seen."

"You read it?"

"I wouldn't have come after you if I hadn't seen the page it was opened up to. It's good Angela. Not great, but it's real. And that's something. Here."

I took it from him and shoved it in my shoulder bag. I didn't know what to say so I said nothing and started to walk away. Before I could cross the street, he had grabbed my arm and pulled me back.

"Wait. I really want to talk to you again."

"Why?"

"Honestly, I don't know. I think there is something good in there," he said pointing to my head.

"Oh, when you put it that way. Honestly though, how old are you? What on earth do you want to hang out with an eighteen-year-old for?"

"I'm not as old as you might think. I'm only twenty-nine..."

"Only..."

"Hey, I'm not exactly ancient here. I just want to talk to you again, not get you into bed."

"Well that's reassuring..."

"You're funny," he said, finally letting go of my arm and smiling.

"Yeah, I think you're the first person in my entire life to tell me that. Normally its, 'You're so well-adjusted.' And that's just because I don't talk much."

"So, can I call you?"

"If you want, though I can't imagine why you would want to."

I felt around in my bag for a piece of paper and finally just handed him my poetry book.

"My number's on the inside cover. Please, just burn the rest when you've written it down."

"Okay. It was nice talking to you, Angela," he said, turning and walking away.

"And you, Paul. Enlightening, even," I called after him.

the wind softly whispers—

by rebecca roberts

the wind softly whispers—
tonight the sky is without stars and the moon is dull
i am the only one left.
can you still feel me as i pass,
my breeze slightly raising your chin as you breathe?
am i strong enough for your
Imagination,
colored enough for your Dreams,
Loud enough to break the silence within this quiet space?
i love to hear your sweet voice echo through
my ear, which I have memorized;
and your beauty and your eyes
that focus upon the windshield wipers flapping
back and forth during those rainy
nights, that i have been beside you.
sometimes there are too many raindrops to see clearly
but with you
everything is clear.
my mind freezes because of you.
i am still within the darkness
tossing and turning as the seconds
tick by;
tick tock, tick tock
waiting for the phone to ring.
while you're away
i am frozen
dead-like
because i have yet to hear your voice
and i am missing you more every second
that passes
by.

Lost While Entwined

by Paul J. Lawlor

Your touch
My breath
Your ear
My ear
Your breath
My touch

Hello Neighbors!

(A story for children, ages 3-5)

by Kelly Stevens

This is the most exciting day of Danny's life. His mom and dad have just bought him his first bicycle, a brand-new bicycle. It is shiny and red and has training wheels that help Danny stay balanced while he learns to ride. He is so excited! He gets onto the bike, which is a little wobbly at first. He puts his feet on the pedals, and Dad gives him a nice big push to get him started. Danny is doing it! He is riding his brand-new bike. He is doing a great job!

"We are so proud of you!" Mom and Dad exclaim.

"Go ahead and ride around the block, Danny. We will be right behind you if you need any help," Mom calls after him. Danny starts to pedal down the sidewalk.

Danny sees the mailman up ahead. He is delivering mail to Mr. and Mrs. Johnson. He zooms past to show how fast he can go on his bike. "Hello!" says Danny.

"Whoa!" says the mailman. "That's a fast bike you've got there! Are you the Pony Express?"

Danny pulls into the little gas station on the corner. He wants to show his new bike to Bill, who works there. Danny rides over the cord that makes the bell ring inside the station. *Bump, bump* goes his bicycle. *Ding, ding* goes the gas station bell.

Bill walks outside to see who his customer is.

"Hello!" says Danny.

"Hello, Danny! That's a fine bicycle you're riding. How about some air in those tires?" asks Bill. He shows Danny how to use the air hose and sends him on his way.

"Thanks, Bill!" calls Danny.

Danny rides past the neighborhood grocery store that has a fresh fruit stand on the sidewalk. "Hello!" says Danny.

The grocer says, "Your bike is as shiny and red as my apples. Catch!" He tosses an apple to Danny. He takes his hands off the handlebars and catches it. Danny thanks him and keeps pedaling.

Danny slows down at the next corner of his block. At the busy intersection, a police officer is there to direct traffic and help people cross the street. Danny knows he is not supposed to cross the busy street, but he likes to see the police officer at work. He stops and says, "Hello!"

"Look both ways before crossing the street on that new bike," says the police officer.

"I'm not crossing the street today. I'm just going around the block to show my new bike to neighborhood friends," says Danny.

"Thanks for stopping to say hello," says the police officer as he smiles and waves to Danny.

Danny pedals past his neighbor who has a pretty flower garden in her yard. "Hello!" says Danny.

"That new bike is as pretty as a rose," smiles the lady as she waters her flowers. She accidentally waters Danny, too.

Danny rides past the firehouse just in time to see the firefighters and their dog pull up in the fire truck.

"Hello!" says Danny.

"You're going so fast, you could be going to a fire!" they say.

Danny is almost home when he rides past people working on the street. They are helping to fix the potholes. "Hello!" says Danny.

"Nice wheels, kid!" says one of the friendly workers.

"Take good care of your bike," says the other worker.

"I will!" promises Danny as he rides on.

When Danny gets home, he sees his best friend. Ralph has a new bike, too! It is sparkly blue with a bell on the handle and training wheels. "Let's go around the block, so you can show your new bike to the neighbors," says Danny.

And that's just what they do.

Shane and the Pot o' Gold

by Aaron Gettings

"You never let me do anything!" Shane yelled as he slammed the door of his house. Wiping the tears from his face, he scooped up his basketball from his driveway and ran down the street to the nearby playground. It was St. Patrick's Day and Shane's friend Billy was throwing a party, but Shane wasn't allowed to go. "They never let me do anything," he sighed as he made his way through the high unkempt grass surrounding the basketball court.

Shane didn't like basketball much and was not very good at it, but he just needed to get away from his parents. Already upset, his frustration grew with each air ball he threw up that flew past the rim. Finally, he had had enough. "Grrrr!" he growled as he punted his ball far into the field of overgrown grass.

Watching the ball soar through the clear blue sky, Shane realized that he had probably done a pretty bad thing since the grass in that part of the field was about as tall as he was, and he would probably never find his basketball. Shane watched very carefully to see where the ball would land because he knew that if he lost his ball, his father would be very upset with him.

"Huh?" Shane muttered as he saw his ball bounce off the top of the grass. "It had to be my imagination," and he started running to where he thought he had seen his ball land. The further he got into the field, the higher the grass grew until it was over his head. "Oh no," Shane thought as he tried to find his basketball. "I'll never find it in all this. I'm going to be in big trouble."

After searching for a while, Shane decided to give up and go home. "U-oh," he said as he turned around and saw towers of grass. He had no idea where he was or which way to go. Panicking, he picked a direction and ran. He hadn't run for long when he felt something strike his foot, which sent him toppling over in the grass. Thinking it was his basketball, he quickly sprang to his feet and turned around to get it. Parting the grass, Shane looked down, and what he saw was not his basketball at all, but a short little man in a green suit lying face down on the ground.

"Excuse me, sir, are you ok?" Shane asked as he bent down, but the man didn't answer.

"Sir?" Shane asked louder, but still there was no answer. Thinking that the man might be hurt, Shane grabbed him in an attempt to lift him up.

"Hey!" the little man exclaimed in a high pitched voice as he was awakened. Startled, Shane dropped him and took a few steps back.

"What are you doing?" The little man growled as he stumbled to his feet, picking up his green top hat on the way up. This man looked like no one Shane had ever seen before. Shane was only nine, and small for his age, but the little

man still barely came up to his chest. The little man's face looked very old and wrinkled, and it was covered with a moustache-less beard.

"I... I was just trying to see if you were alright," Shane answered sheepishly.

The little man persisted. "No, I mean what are you doing here, in this field?"

"I was just looking for--"

"Looking for what?" he interrupted.

"Looking for my basketball."

The little man looked suspicious. "Is that it? Are you sure you're not looking for anything else?"

"No sir, I just kicked my basketball here and now I can't find it, and my father is going to be very mad at me," Shane said. "Hey!!!" Suddenly it was Shane who had grown suspicious. He glared at the little man. "What are you doing here?"

"Well I was looking for something too until I was hit on the head and knocked out." The little man began to search through the grass.

"Sorry about that. It was probably my basketball. What are you looking for?" Shane wondered.

"Well, it's a secret," the little man replied as he walked further away from Shane into the grass.

"C'mon, you can tell me." Shane ran to catch up with him. "I won't tell anyone."

The little man stopped and turned around to face Shane. "Promise?" he asked.

"I promise."

"Well, ok. I'm looking for my pot of gold," the little man said as he turned around and began searching again.

"Your pot of gold? How did you get one of those? And how did you lose it?"

"How did I get a pot of gold? Don't you know what I am, laddie?" he asked with a chuckle.

Shane felt shy suddenly. "Um, sorry, but no, I don't."

The little man became very excited. "Why, I'm a leprechaun!" he shouted.

"A lep-lep-leprowhat?" Shane was bewildered.

"A leprechaun, my good man," he said as he began to dance around.

"Leprechauns are very special, magical people. We live in Ireland, and each of us has our own pot of gold, which gives us our magical powers."

"So you can do magic?" Shane asked excitedly. "Wow! Let me see some!"

"Lad, don't you listen?" the leprechaun replied sarcastically. "Pots of gold give leprechauns magical powers. I lost my pot of gold... C'mon, you can put two and two together."

"Sorry," Shane said, a little embarrassed. "But, if you're from Ireland, why are you looking for your pot of gold here?"

"I was here yesterday to visit a friend of mine, a troll, and I know I had it with me then."

"A troll?! There's a troll here? Where?" Shane asked scared.

"Look lad, I don't have time for twenty questions. Can you help me find my pot of gold so I can go back home? I have a party to get to tonight. It is St. Patrick's Day you know." The leprechaun began searching again.

"I know," Shane said sadly. "I have a party to go to too, but my parents won't let me."

"That's too bad... now can you help me find my gold or not?" The little man was losing his patience with Shane.

"Um, yeah, if you help me find my basketball," Shane replied.

"Lad, if you help me find my pot of gold, I'll give you a million basketballs. I just need to find this gold."

"Fine. It's a deal," Shane said pleasantly. "Now, where do you think you left it?"

"Kid, you're killing me here. If I knew where I left it... " the leprechaun had to pause because he was getting so upset with Shane, "do you think I would be looking for it?"

"Well... no, I suppose not," Shane decided, totally oblivious to the fact that the leprechaun was giving him dirty looks.

They both sifted through the grass for about an hour, silently until they decided that the pot of gold must not be there.

"Well, it's obviously not here," the leprechaun called out to Shane who was a ways away in the field.

"What do we do now?" Shane called back as he made his way to where the leprechaun was.

"Go look somewhere else, I suppose," the leprechaun responded.

The little man's answer worried Shane a little. "Do you mean go to another place?"

The leprechaun rolled his eyes sarcastically. "Yeah... that's usually what 'looking somewhere else' involves."

"Well..." Shane started nervously.

" 'Well' what?"

"I'm not supposed to go anywhere with strangers," he explained.

"Aw, geez," the leprechaun sighed. "Well, we haven't been formally introduced, now have we?"

"No, we haven't."

"All righty then. My name is MacGowan, MacGowan the Leprechaun."

"And I'm Shane, Shane Gabrielle."

"Nice to meet you Shane." The leprechaun smiled as he extended his hand to Shane's.

After shaking hands, Shane asked MacGowan where they would go to now.

"I suppose we'll check back in Ireland."

"Ireland?! But we're in America! How on earth will we get all the way to Ireland?" Shane wondered with excitement.

"The same way I got here," MacGowan began. "We leprechauns have a special way of getting from place to place."

"How's that?"

"Why, through rainbows!" MacGowan exclaimed.

Shane's eyes grew as large as a watermelon. "No way!"

MacGowan couldn't help but chuckle at Shane's reaction. "Oh, it's the truth me boy."

"No way!" Shane said again. He couldn't say anything else.

Getting a little annoyed with the boy, MacGowan decided to just beckon the rainbow, instead of trying to explain it to the boy. A puzzled look spread across Shane's face as he saw the little man doing a jig. Then the earth beneath his feet started to rumble.

Instantly from the ground sprouted the largest, brightest, most colorful thing Shane had ever seen. Each colored bar of the rainbow was at least the width of three Shanes.

"Wow," Shane whispered as his eyes lit up with wonder. He looked up to see the top of the rainbow, but it went higher than his eyes could reach.

"Aye," MacGowan responded, "'tis a beautiful sight."

Shane spun around to see the gigantic color-making machine illuminating everything with its beautiful rays of light. Even the little green man was turned into a magnificent red. "Wow," he whispered again. He was utterly speechless.

"You know," MacGowan began, "you're one of the few humans to ever see this beautiful sight up close."

Shane looked at him in disbelief. "Really?"

"Aye. And there's a very good reason for that, laddie."

"What's that?" Shane asked. His eyes were transfixed on the rainbow, trying to figure out why something so wonderful should be hidden from so many people.

"Because, Shane, when a human does see the rainbow, most often they spend half of their lives trying to find it again. Many a family has been ruined, and many a child lost searching for the very thing you're staring at right now," the leprechaun explained. "That's why humans almost always see rainbows from a distance. We leprechauns have rigged it so no matter how close a human gets to a rainbow, it always appears to be the same distance away."

"How do the ones who do see it see it then?" Shane was still staring into the brightness of the rainbow.

"The very way you are right now. Stumbling across a leprechaun who shows it to them," MacGowan replied.

"Oh," Shane really didn't know how to respond.

"Well, whattayasay, lad? You ready?" MacGowan asked as he crouched down.

"Um, I guess so, but what do I do?"

"Crouch down like me, then on the count of three, we jump."

"Jump?" Shane asked. "Like, on to the rainbow?"

"Yup, pretty much the only way that rainbow is going to take us anywhere is if we jump on it. So, are you ready?"

"I think so," Shane had a worried look on his face.

"C'mon Shane. There's nothing to be scared of. I've done this thousands of times. So, I'm only going to ask one more time... are you ready?" MacGowan yelled, trying to get Shane's courage up.

"I'm ready!" Shane screamed as he crouched down, imitating MacGowan's stance.

"All right. One... Two... Two and a half..." MacGowan joked.

Shane giggled. "Hey!"

"Ok, for real this time. One, Two, Three, JUMP!"

MacGowan and Shane leapt into the gigantic rainbow. Upon contact, the current of the rainbow grabbed hold of the two and swiftly carried them across land and sea. MacGowan looked behind him to see Shane unable to grasp what was really going on. Shane kept putting his hand through the rainbow, trying to figure out how it could hold their bodies, yet let him put his hand right through it. MacGowan could tell that Shane was about to ask how it worked.

"Shane, me boy. It's magic. It can't be explained or understood, but it can't be denied either. It can only be accepted." MacGowan turned his head and looked out over the Atlantic Ocean, thinking to himself *'What am I talking about? Please, no more questions Shane, at least not about this, because I DO NOT KNOW!'*

Shane had no idea whatsoever what MacGowan was talking about, but he figured it would be better if he didn't ask. He also gazed out over the Atlantic. His face lit up when he thought he saw a whale, but they were moving so fast, he couldn't tell.

The rest of the ride on the rainbow was silent. The beauty of the world sucked in both Shane and MacGowan's attentions. They had only been riding on the rainbow for about fifteen minutes when Shane glanced ahead and saw the greenest thing he had ever seen. "Whoa," Shane called out to MacGowan. "What's that?"

"That, Shane, is Ireland," MacGowan said with a gigantic smile spread across his face. He liked seeing the world, but nothing beat home. Nothing beat Ireland.

"It's so green... why, it's even greener than the green in this rainbow!" Shane exclaimed.

"Aye, 'tis a green land, she is. That's why they call her the Emerald Isle." A tear rose in MacGowan's little green eye as he said this.

The rainbow slowed and Shane realized that their magical ride was about to end. When they finally reached Ireland, the rainbow gently dropped the two to the ground. Shane got up and turned around, but the rainbow was gone.

"Hey MacGowan?"

"Yes, Shane?" the leprechaun asked as he dusted himself off.

Shane had a twinkle in his eye. "Can we do that again?"

"Of course!"

"Yes!" Shane hissed.

MacGowan looked at him slyly. "After we find me pot of gold."

"Awww, man," Shane said as his smile slowly turned upside down. "Where do we look?"

"Well, first we have to stop by my house to check my mail. I'm expecting a package, and I'm scared that it'll get stolen," MacGowan said as he began to walk towards a forest. Shane didn't notice that MacGowan was walking away; he was too busy taking in all the sights around him.

To the left of Shane was a deep blue lake, and just beyond that was an ancient castle that didn't appear to have had anyone living in it for a long time. To Shane's right were rows and rows of luscious, green, rolling hills. Shane could see a few sheep grazing scattered amongst the hills. And in front of Shane was a forest filled with extremely bright green trees. Shane almost missed MacGowan disappearing into the forest because his green clothes blended in with the background.

"Hey, MacGowan, wait up!" Shane called as he ran after the little man.

When Shane caught up with the leprechaun, MacGowan was standing next to a thick tree. "Welcome to me home, Shane," MacGowan said with a smile.

"A tree? You live next to a tree?" Shane had a puzzled look on his face.

"No, no, no. I live in the tree," MacGowan explained.

"But how do you get inside?" Shane began to walk around the tree, searching for a passageway.

"Same way I presume you get into your house—through the door."

Shane had made his way completely around the tree. "But there's no door!" he cried.

"What do you call that then?" MacGowan pointed to a door that was right in front of Shane.

"Wait a minute! That wasn't there two seconds ago... was it?" Shane was completely confused.

"Come in Shane," MacGowan said as he entered his home.

"Hey," Shane called, "was that door there or not?"

"Forget it me boy, come inside. I want to see if my package has arrived yet," MacGowan said as he began searching through his home.

Shane entered the doorway to MacGowan's house. "Get outta town!" MacGowan's house was huge! It was ten times larger than Shane's house. "How in the world? How does? How?" Shane couldn't understand how all this space could be inside that tree.

"Shane, remember that talk we had about magic before? Don't ask why, just accept it."

"All right, all right," Shane said as he looked around MacGowan's house. Then he saw something glowing in the corner. "Hey, MacGowan?"

"Not now, Shane, I'm trying to find my package," MacGowan called from somewhere in his mansion. Shane decided he'd check it out himself. Just as he thought, it was a pot of gold.

"But, MacGowan, I really think you should come here." Shane's eyes were glowing at the massive amount of money before him.

"Shane, I don't have time to answer any more of your questions. I need to find my package so we can go find me gold!" MacGowan snapped.

Shane answered him calmly. "But, you really should come here!" He waited, then heard a loud bang from wherever MacGowan was, and the sound of little feet stomping on the ground.

"What? What is it that's so important that I have to put everything on hold? What do—Oh!" MacGowan stopped as he entered the entrance of his house where Shane stood. "Me gold! Me precious pot o' gold!" MacGowan yelled as he ran to Shane. "Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you!" MacGowan grabbed Shane tightly in a hug and spun him around.

"You're welcome!"

"You know, it's always in the last place you look!" MacGowan said as he began to kiss each piece of gold individually.

Shane pondered MacGowan's last statement for a moment. "Well, of course it's always in the last place you look."

"What are you talking about?" MacGowan was still kissing his gold.

"I mean, why would you keep looking if you've already found it?" Shane reasoned.

MacGowan shot Shane a dirty look, then went back to his gold. After MacGowan got through kissing each piece, he picked the pot up and began dancing around his house with it, humming an Irish jig.

"Hey!" Shane cried, as a piece of paper dropped from the bottom of the pot. "There's a note."

MacGowan carefully set the pot down and read the note:

Dear MacGowan,

I was cleaning up and I noticed that your gold looked extremely dusty (most likely from lack of use. Lord knows you don't use any of it to show me any gratitude). So I took it to the goldsmith for a cleaning. Hope you didn't miss it.

Your cleaning lady,
Sally MacLennane

"So that's where it was!" MacGowan chuckled. "That Sally..." He looked back at Shane with a grin.

"So, now what?" Shane asked him.

MacGowan's face suddenly turned sad. "Well, me boy, now you go home."

"Aww, but I don't wanna go home!" Tears began to gather in Shane's eyes.

"I don't want you to either, Shane, but you've got parents at home who love you very much, and I'm sure they miss you right now!" MacGowan, too, could feel tears coming to his eyes.

Shane sighed. "I suppose you're right..."

"Hey, look on the bright side. You'll get to ride on the rainbow again!" MacGowan smiled, hoping this would cheer Shane up. It did a little bit.

"Yea, you're right! But, will I ever get to see you again?" Shane's face shone brightly as he asked.

"Of course you will. I'll tell ya what. Once a year, on this very day, I'll come pick you up from school and you can come back here and celebrate St. Patrick's Day with me and my friends," MacGowan was already looking forward to the thought.

"Wow! Can I really?" Shane cried, totally forgetting about his sadness.

"Of course ye can. Now let's get you home."

Shane and MacGowan exited the leprechaun's house and went back to the field where they had landed. "Thanks for your help Shane. I really appreciate it."

"Any time, MacGowan, any time. If you ever lose your gold again, you know where to find me!"

"Aye, I do. And I won't hesitate to take you up on that offer." MacGowan truly meant his words.

"I hope you won't."

Shane watched MacGowan do his jig, and once again, the gigantic color-making machine sprouted from the ground.

"Well, I guess this is good-bye," MacGowan said, once again feeling the tears come to his eyes.

"No, not good-bye," Shane smiled. "Just a see-ya-later."

This made MacGowan smile. "Yea, see ya later." He grabbed Shane in a bear hug. "I'll miss you, me boy."

"I'll miss you too, MacGowan."

"Until next time."

"Until next time," Shane replied. Then he turned around, crouched, and hopped onto the rainbow that brought him back home.

* * * * *

"Shane Jack Gabrielle," Shane's mother yelled as he walked through the door. "I thought I told you not to go to that party!"

"But..." Shane began to respond.

"What do you have to say for yourself, mister?" His mother's face was stern.

"Oh, nothing," Shane replied.

"Then go upstairs and get to bed. And Shane, get used to it up there, because you're grounded for two weeks... Not a word," Shane's mother growled as she pointed to the stairs. "Now get to bed!"

Shane turned his back to his mother and headed to the staircase with a large smirk on his face. All the punishment in the world would be worth what he had just been through.

'And they'll never know!' he thought to himself as he entered his room.

Shane flicked on the light to discover a brand new basketball lying on his bed.

He ran over to the ball and was about to pick it up when he noticed two things set on top: a piece of gold and a four-leaf clover. A tear ran down his cheek as he picked up his new basketball and placed the gold and shamrock on his windowsill.

He turned around to go back to bed when he noticed a note lying on his pillow.

"That wasn't there two seconds ago..." Shane whispered. He picked up the note and read it:

Dear Shane,

I hope you enjoy your new ball. I told you that if you helped me find my gold, I'd give you a basketball. Sorry you got into so much trouble, but I hope it was worth it for you. And don't forget to mark March 17th on your calendar. I'll be waiting for you in the field.

Happy St. Patrick's Day,
MacGowan the Leprechaun

When Dreams Come True

by Margaret Mahoney

Bobby could smell the magic in the air as he saw the hay being lifted from the last train cart on the track. He could see the magic begin to unfold as he saw the elephants, workmen, and the young country boys straining to pull the great canopy of material that would soon unfold into a tent.

His bright blue eyes wandered from place to place, almost as if he were seeing these sights for the first time. He saw the ringmaster practicing his opening lines. He could hear the animals chatter as they were being washed and fed. The buttery aroma of popcorn and the sweet sugary smell of cotton candy were swirling about in the air.

Bobby was going to get up and get some popcorn when he heard a big BANG. He looked up and saw the strangest site of the day. His six-year-old sister, Cindy Lou, was plopped on the ground with a heap of peanuts surrounding her. Next to Cindy Lou was the red peanut cart turned over on its side with mounds of peanuts still spilling out of it.

"What happened?" asked Bobby as he put his hand up to his mouth to keep himself from laughing.

With fright in her voice Cindy Lou answered, "I was riding my unicycle past the lion's cage, and one of the lions started to roar. He scared me and that's when I bumped into the peanut wagon."

Bobby got up from the log he was sitting on and went over to his sister's unicycle, which had taken a beating after its run-in with the peanut wagon. One of the training wheels was hanging off the side, and Bobby noticed that some of the purple paint had been scratched off.

As he reached over to help his sister up, he said, "Maybe, on our way to school we can get Handyman Joe to fix your unicycle."

The corners of Cindy Lou's mouth began to turn into a smile. She brushed away the peanuts that had fallen into her cherry red hair. "Bobby, what are we going to do about this mess?" she asked, looking at the peanuts that had fallen onto the ground.

"Don't worry about the nuts, Cin. The circus has the latest model of vacuum cleaners. See what I mean?" Bobby replied as two elephants sauntered by and picked up the peanuts with their trunks. "Cindy, you know what?" he asked with glee in his eyes. "Maybe we could use your peanut-smashing unicycle ride in our act. The audience would love it!"

Bobby had to duck as his sister took a handful of peanuts and tried to hit him with them. Instead the peanuts went into the mouth of an elephant standing near by, one that was too lazy to pick up the peanuts on the ground. "I still

think your unicycle ride would make the audience roar with laughter," Bobby replied as he ran up the road to Handyman Joe's work tent.

Cindy Lou soon caught up with her older brother and nudged him gently from behind. They listened to the bang, click, and clang that was coming from inside Handyman Joe's tent. As Bobby and Cindy Lou walked inside the tent, they could see Handyman Joe working on a silvery shiny object. Exactly what it was, though, they could not tell. Bobby knew that he had to get Joe's attention.

"Handyman Joe," Bobby yelled. But Joe could not hear him over all of the noise he was making. Bobby cleared his throat and tried again in a much louder and stronger voice: "HANDYMAN JOE!"

This time, the grayish-brown-haired man in overalls had heard the little boy. "No need to shout. I'm not deaf, you know!" answered Handyman Joe while sticking his finger in his ear to stop it from ringing. "What are you clowns up to today?"

Handyman Joe was not just giving the children a nickname. They really were clowns. Bobby had been born into the circus. He could remember the first time his parents had made him a part of their act. He was two or three years old, and his parents had had him sit in a small fire truck. He had worn a red fire hat and had held a hose filled with water that he sprayed at the crowd. Being a clown was all this little boy of eight years had ever known.

"We just wanted to know if you could fix Cindy Lou's training wheel. She got into a bit of an accident this morning," Bobby laughed as he related the story to Handyman Joe.

"Bobbby..." Cindy Lou whined. Her face had gone from a pale white to a flaming red. It was almost the same color as the red noses they wore when they were doing their act.

"Well," the handyman said, chuckling, "I'll see what I can do after I finish fixing this trapeze for one of the flyers." Bobby marveled as he saw the trapeze lying on the workbench. He realized now that this was the glimmering silver he had seen when they had first entered the tent. It was the prettiest trapeze Bobby had ever seen. The silver, red and blue colored trapeze seemed to sparkle, and the ropes were strong and sturdy. His dream was to someday become a flyer. Bobby sighed heavily as he wiped away a tear. He knew that it could not be possible. His family were clowns, and a clown he must stay.

He walked over to the trapeze and ran his hand along the smooth metal bar. "Whose trapeze is it?" he asked eagerly. Bobby was thinking to himself that it must be a wonderful feeling to swing from the air, and to twirl and spin a hundred feet from the ground.

"You wouldn't dare catch me up on one of these contraptions," said Handyman Joe as he stamped his foot heavily on the ground. "But to answer

your question, Bobby, this trapeze belongs to Christina Glide."

Bobby replied with a dreamy look on his face, "I just wish, even for a moment, that I could go up on a trapeze."

"Bobby!" said Cindy Lou, "Clowns are not meant to fly on a trapeze. Momma and Papa are always telling you that."

"I know, Cindy," said Bobby with a sigh. "But don't you ever wish that you could do something different? That you could be something besides a clown?"

Cindy Lou did not have time to scold her brother for even thinking about not being a clown. The school bell was ringing, and they had to hurry, or they would be late. "Children," said Joe, "I'll have the unicycle fixed by the time school lets out."

The school bell could be heard ringing again for a third time. Cindy Lou looked nervous as she heard the ding-dong of the bells ringing. "Bobby, I don't want to be late. Do you remember the last time we were late?" Cindy Lou asked nervously as she bit her thumbnail. Cindy Lou always did this when she was nervous. "Miss Blooma Polka Dots made us stay after school and wash all of the chalkboards." Washing the chalkboards wasn't bad, Cindy Lou thought, but she hated how the chalk dust felt when it was all thick and goeey on her hands.

"You better take that pail down there, sweetheart, you may need it," Joe said, pointing to a gray bucket on the floor. Cindy Lou looked at the bucket, and her stomach turned as she imagined the pale-yellow watery chalk dust inside the bucket.

"Bobby," said Joe in a hushed voice, so Cindy Lou could not hear, "Christina will be here around that time to pick up her trapeze. She could tell you more about flying."

"Bye Handyman Joe, see you later," Cindy Lou said as she walked out of the tent.

"OK, I'll be here, Handyman Joe," Bobby said excitedly. He picked up his unicycle and hurried to catch up with his sister. The school tent was a couple of tents up from Handyman Joe's work tent.

When the children got to school, all of their classmates were putting on their face paint. They were being tested on how to make the perfect clown smile. Bobby usually outlined his smile in black, but today he outlined his red smile in blue.

"Bobby, look what you're doing!" said Cindy Lou, shocked that Bobby would use blue instead of black. Bobby knew that their family always used black. Cindy shouldn't have had to tell him. Bobby looked closely at his red, white, and blue face. It made him remember Christina's trapeze and how he could not wait to talk to her after school.

Bobby's teacher, Miss Blooma Polka Dots, walked up behind Bobby and said, "I like it Bobby. It makes you look very American." Bobby was glad that his teacher liked the colors he had used on his smile because all he wanted to think about today was the trapeze and how he was going to be on it very soon.

After the face-painting test, they had pie-throwing class, joke-and-riddle class, and they ended the day with stilt-walking class. All of these subjects were favorites of Bobby, but today he would gladly have traded them for a flying lesson.

Finally, the final bell could be heard buzzing throughout the school. All of the children ran out of the school, laughing over the events of the day. Some of the children headed home because they had chores to do. Others skipped along to a playground next to the circus grounds.

As Bobby and Cindy were going to Handyman Joe's work tent, Bobby told Cindy that he was going to talk to Christina Glide about flying. Bobby stopped and put his hand on Cindy Lou's shoulder. "I need you to promise not to tell Mom and Pop about me talking to Christina," he pleaded.

"But Bobby, I can't lie to them," Cindy answered, biting her fingernail.

"I'm not asking you to lie. I just don't want you to tell them anything unless they ask, ok?" Bobby looked at Cindy for some reassurance that she would keep his secret.

Cindy Lou pretended to lock her mouth with a key and throw it away. "I won't tell. I promise."

"Good, because if you do, then I'll make sure the peanut-smashing unicycle ride is part of our act," Bobby said as he winked at his sister.

"Bobby..." replied Cindy as she rolled her eyes.

Bobby and Cindy started walking towards Handyman Joe's tent again. Cindy was worried that Bobby might not be aware of the trouble he could be getting himself into.

"Are you really going to talk to Christina about flying?" asked Cindy Lou with some concern.

"Yes, Cin, I am. I want to be a flyer. Imagine, Cindy, jumping and swirling in the air with only a safety net to catch your fall. That must be the most amazing feeling. It has to be the closest thing to flying there is," he said as he looked up towards the sky.

"It sounds kind of scary to me," said Cindy Lou biting down hard on her thumbnail again.

"I'm not happy being a clown anymore. I am not that good at it. The only way I can get a laugh is if you, Momma, or Pop throw a pie at me or something," said Bobby with his head hanging low.

"That isn't true, Bobby. You get lots of laughs by yourself, like the time when... ummm when...." Cindy Lou tapped her finger against her forehead.

"See, Cindy, you can't even remember the last time I got a laugh on my own. You, on the other hand, were born to be a clown," said Bobby looking directly at his sister. "Look, there's Christina!" Bobby's face brightened, when he saw Christina talking with Handyman Joe. He left his sister and ran up to Handyman Joe's workshop where Christina was holding her trapeze. "Hi Christina! I wanted to ask you about being a flyer, how did you learn, what is it like being up so high in the air, can you teach me, when can I start?" Bobby rambled on with excitement.

Christina laughed as she saw the excitement on Bobby's face, shining like the sun. "Bobby, I'd be happy to teach you everything I know." Christina saw that Cindy Lou was standing next to Handyman Joe. Cindy Lou's expression was the opposite of her brother's. It was one that you would expect to see in the sky when a bad storm came rolling in. "Why don't you come with me to the circus tent, and I'll teach you? Would you like to come too, Cindy?" Christina asked.

"No, thank you. I don't think I should and neither should Bobby," said Cindy Lou with anger in her voice. She picked up her fixed unicycle and rode off with it. Both Christina and Handyman Joe had worried looks on their faces as they watched Cindy Lou leave.

"Don't worry. She'll be ok," said Bobby, who was a little worried that she would tell their parents what he was up to. "Come on Christina, let's go." Bobby waved his hand in the direction of the circus tent.

A few minutes later, Bobby was living out his dream. Christina was teaching him the basics of becoming a trapeze artist. She taught him how to do jumps by placing a trampoline in the center ring. Bobby had to jump up as high as he could into the air and then spin. His first couple tries landed him on the soft bouncy matting of the trampoline, and he frowned as he sat on the trampoline, bouncing slightly. "I'll never get it right."

Christina came over and patted Bobby on the back, "Of course you will, Bobby. This is only your first day. It takes practice."

Bobby knew that Christina was right. After all, his parents were always telling him that you couldn't put a circus together in a day. Of course it would take time. He went home after practice feeling very tired. His mother, father, and Cindy Lou were all sitting at the table eating dinner.

His father looked up from his plate as he saw Bobby walk into the room. "Well," he said with a smile on his face, "how did practice go?" Bobby's father told story after story about his old baseball days on the circus baseball team. They all started with, "I remember when...." and ended with, "Those were the days."

Bobby knew that his father would be hurt when he found out the truth. He felt bad that he was telling his parents he was at baseball practice. But at least, Bobby thought to himself, it wasn't a total lie because he was practicing something. Still, a knot would twist and turn in his tummy every time his father asked how practice was going.

"Practice went great, Dad," Bobby said with half a smile on his face. The other half couldn't smile because he was filled with guilt.

"Have you caught any fly balls, today?" his father asked beaming with pride. The expression on his face showed how happy he was that his son was following in his footsteps.

Bobby replied stammering, "Yeahhhh, Daaad, I caught fly balls today. Yes, I sure did. One was so high, I had to jump four feet in the air in order to catch it." Bobby hadn't really lied either because Christina would throw balls to him, as he was swinging from a trapeze to teach him how to keep his balance. Whenever you throw a ball, they always fly through the air, Bobby thought, as he was trying to rationalize his answer.

"Good for you. That's my boy!" his father exclaimed proudly. It was funny. Bobby didn't feel so good. The knot in his stomach had just gotten a lot tighter.

"Bobby what's the matter? Aren't you feeling well?" his father asked, concerned. "He's probably just hungry," his mother said, putting a plate of food on the table for Bobby to eat. "Come sit down, my little baseball player, and have something to eat." His mother smiled and poured him a glass of milk.

Bobby sat down at the table to eat, but he really wasn't hungry, and he was also trying to avoid the "You-are-in-big-trouble" glare he was getting from his sister. Bobby knew that his parents would eventually find out the truth, but he wanted to wait just a bit longer, just until he became really, really good. Then maybe there would be no way his parents could say no to him becoming a flyer.

It had been a month since Bobby had started practicing with Christina. Today, she was teaching him how to do somersaults. "Remember Bobby, keep your head tucked under," she said as Bobby was doing his somersault. "You're a natural, Bobby," Christina said with enthusiasm.

"I am?" asked Bobby as he jumped from the trapeze onto the net. "You think I really am a natural, Christina?"

Christina smiled. "Yes I do, Bobby. You have talent. Most flyers can't do a somersault after only being up a couple of times."

"I knew I would love it up there! I love the feel of the air moving all around me," he said, as he jumped down from the trapeze onto the safety net.

Bobby didn't yet know it, but three other people besides Christina had been

watching him doing that somersault. His parents had decided to watch their son practice baseball that day even though Cindy Lou told them they shouldn't go because it would make him nervous. But Cindy Lou's parents thought that was a bunch of nonsense. Then, when they got to the field and didn't see Bobby but could hear his voice inside the circus tent, they began to wonder.

Bobby heard an angry voice off in the distance. "Most baseball players do love the excitement of jumping up in the air and feeling the air around them as the ball goes into their glove. I just never knew they played baseball so high up. Hmmm...trapeze baseball must be a new version that I've never heard of before."

As Bobby turned towards the entrance of the tent and saw his father, mother and sister standing there, his heart felt as heavy as the sawdust below him. "Hi Mum. Hi Pop," Bobby managed to say in a squeaky voice.

"What do you think you're doing?" demanded his father, standing with his arms folded across his chest.

"Well, Pop I'm sitting on the safety net," Bobby replied shakily.

His mother was standing with her hands on her hips. "Bobby, you know what your father meant. We are bringing you up to be a clown, not a flyer. Please come down from there and stop all of this nonsense."

"I'll come down, Mom, because you asked, but I won't give up my dream. I want to be a flyer. Maybe if you could just watch me, you'll see how good I am and understand," said Bobby as he hopped down from the safety net.

"You could at least give him a chance, Bonkers and Petunia," said Christina, trying to intervene with Bobby's parents.

"But he comes from a family of clowns, and he's not going to change that by becoming a flyer," said his father stubbornly.

"Dad, I know I'll always be a clown, but I just want to be a clown that can swing, twirl, and spin high up in the air!" said Bobby, looking up towards the trapeze.

"Clowns aren't supposed to do any of those things Bobby. They're supposed to make people laugh and feel good about themselves," his mother said, tears brimming in her eyes.

Bobby faced his parents with his arms crossed. "I am going to become a flyer whether you like it or not, Momma, and you can't stop me." He could be stubborn, just like his parents.

"Bobby you shouldn't talk to your mother in that tone of voice," his father replied sternly, "and we can stop you if we want to."

"At least let me show you what I can do," pleaded Bobby.

His father answered reluctantly. "All right, show us."

As Bobby walked up the side of the ladder and looked down at his parents, he could see the disappointment on their faces, and his fears grew. "What if I can't do it?" he thought to himself. "What if I fall? They'll never let me do this again."

Bobby knew he had to steady himself. "I can do this," he thought. "I will show them. Besides all I'm going to do is a couple of jumps. But maybe, just to show them, I'll put something different in, something that would surprise even Christina." He grabbed the trapeze and with a jump, flew high in the air. He swung from one trapeze to the other, doing twists, spins, and somersaults to the amazement of everyone watching from the ground. When he was finished, Bobby heard the cheers loud and clear.

Christina exclaimed, "Bobby that was amazing. I didn't think you were ready to put the twist into your routine." She added happily, "But I guess I was wrong."

"Well, Petunia, what do you think?" said Bonkers with a sigh.

Bobby's mother replied with sadness in her voice. "I'm not happy with the idea, but he is good, and if he doesn't totally give up being a clown, then I guess he can be a flyer."

"Really, Mom and Pop? You are going to let me be a flyer?" Bobby shouted excitedly. He jumped down from the trapeze to give them a great big hug.

"Yes, you can become a flyer. Why didn't you tell us you wanted to before? It was wrong of you to lie to us," said his mother while she ran her hands through her son's hair.

"Because Mama, I thought you and Pop would be mad at me. That's why I lied," said Bobby with a frown on his face.

"Well son, we are disappointed. But if you want to be a flyer and if that is your dream, then your mother and I can't stop you," said Bonkers as he looked at his son.

After that, Bobby began working with Christina every day. Then one day, several months later, as Christina was helping him stretch, she announced that he was ready to perform before a live audience.

"Bobby, you will do fine. Just go out there and do your best."

On the big day, a little clown went to the entrance of the tent where his family was waiting for him. "Here we go," Bobby said, as they all started to run out towards center ring.

"Ladies and gentleman, boys and girls, children of all ages, welcome to the

greatest show on earth!" Bobby could hear the ringmaster say as he stood nervously in center ring. He was standing next to monkey bars with a trapeze on them. His parents were going to do flips on the monkey bars as a way to introduce Bobby into his new role in the circus. The spotlight was on his parents. They were trying to swing and do flips on the trapeze. The audience couldn't help but laugh because the trapeze was too low to the ground and they kept falling. Bobby had to admit that they looked ridiculous.

The ringmaster's voice was heard again. "Now, it is time to meet the real flyer in the family...introducing for the first time as a flyer, Bobby the Clown!" The audience looked up at the ladder and saw Bobby climbing up. As he was going up the ladder, Bobby heard a voice.

"You will do fine," he heard Christina say as she gave him a reassuring smile. Bobby looked all around him. He saw his family proudly looking up at him.

"Beep." The whistle had just been blown. That meant it was time for Bobby to begin his act.

Bobby took a deep breath and took hold of the trapeze. "Here I go," he thought to himself. He did his twirls and spins as he glided through the air. As a final part of his act, as he was swinging upside down in the air, Bobby squirted his parents and the audience with water, just like he had his first time out in center ring. When he was done the audience stood and cheered. Bobby had never felt as happy as did at that moment.

"I did it. I have become a flyer," he said to himself. "I really did it."

Bobby's smile had never been as big and bright as it was at that moment.

Te Amaré Para Siempre, Mi Angelita

by Karla Husted

"Te amaré para siempre, mi angelita,"¹ Lourdes Suyapa Perez-Martinez, a petite, dark-skinned Mayan woman said with tears in her big, dark-brown eyes as she placed her sleeping child on the steps of a house.

It was a cold windy night in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Lourdes had been wandering the streets for hours with her baby, Vanessa, held close to her body. She had been in search of a family and a home in which to leave her child.

Lourdes stopped in front of a house and watched through the window for a few minutes. She saw two loving parents playing with their three young children. Hearing the sounds of laughter coming from within the house, she made a decision that would determine the future of her child.

The baby awoke when a tear, slowly trickling down her mother's cheek, landed on her little nose. The dark brown curls that flowed from Lourdes' head were blowing in the wind as she looked down at her baby. The little girl giggled, and her mother slowly knelt next to her. She touched her baby's soft cheeks and gave her a kiss on the forehead. As the soft lips of her mother left her forehead, Vanessa's joyful giggles stopped, and her smile disappeared. A panicked look appeared on her face, and it was as though she knew something was wrong. Lourdes slowly rose to her feet and said to her baby, "Te amo."²

She knocked on the door and ran down the steps of the house, down the street, into the dark and out of sight, maybe never to be seen again by her baby.

When the door opened, the light from inside the house shone down on the baby in her basket. A tall, slim woman stood in the doorway with a look of shock in her eyes. She saw a frightened little girl looking up at her. In a scared voice the woman called to her husband inside the house.

"Carlos!"

"Qué?" her husband answered.

"Ven aquí, hay un bebé a la puerta."

"Cómo llegó?"

"No sé, abrí la puerta, y ella estaba aquí."³

The woman picked Vanessa up out of the basket, and proceeded into the house with the baby in her arms. As the door slowly shut behind her, the scared

¹ I will always love you, my little angel.

² I love you.

³ "Carlos!"

"What?"

"Come here, there is a baby at the door."

"How did it get there?"

"I don't know. I opened the door and she was there."

baby looked over the woman's shoulder in search of her mother who was nowhere to be seen.

The next day, when the man and woman were well rested, they sat down to discuss what was to be done with the baby.

"Qué haremos con ella?" asked the man to his wife.

"No sé, ya tenemos tres niños y no podemos tener uno más," she replied.

"Pero qué será de ella?"

"Por qué no la llevamos a la familia Rosa en la calle abajo?" the husband suggested.

"Sí, es una idea muy buena."⁴

When Vanessa awoke, the woman bundled her up in her basket and proceeded down the street to the Rosas' house. It was a sunny day and the woman squinted as she walked down the street. As she approached the Rosas' home, she looked down at Vanessa and in a baby voice said,

"Hola bebé."⁵

Vanessa looked back up at her and giggled as she was being brought up the steps of the Rosas' home. To the door came Señora Rosa, a short, plump little lady. She invited her neighbor into the house where they would discuss the baby.

"Cómo estás, Martina?"

"Bien, gracias y tú?"

"Bien, pero tengo un problema"

"Qué te pasa?"

"Anoche, Carlos y yo estábamos comiendo, y sonó el timbre de la puerta, cuando abrí la puerta había un bebé. Sin mamá, sin papá, nadie. Carlos y yo hablamos y no podemos quedarnos con ella, puedes quedarte tú con ella?"

"Sí, por qué no, me encantan los bebés."

"Sí! Muy bien, gracias!"⁶

⁴ "What will we do with her?"

"I don't know. We already have three children and can't have another."

"But what will we do with her?"

"Why don't we bring her to the Rosa family down the street?"

"Yes, that's a great idea."

⁵ "Hello baby."

⁶ "How are you Martina?"

"Good thanks, and you?"

"Good, but I have a problem."

"What's wrong?"

"Last night Carlos and I were eating dinner and the doorbell rang. When I opened the door there was a baby. No mother, no father, nobody. Carlos and I talked and we were unable to keep her. Can she stay with you?"

"Yes, why not. I love babies."

"Yes? Great. Thanks."

The woman left Vanessa with Señora Rosa thinking that she would be safe and happy. And at first, Vanessa was very happy living with the new family. The other children of the house would play with the new baby. She was fed well and treated as if she were a member of the family. But a couple of months changed, and things changed. School had started for the Rosa children and the mother and father had gone back to work. Instead of finding daycare for Vanessa, the family began leaving her home alone while they went to school and work. Vanessa spent days sobbing because there was no one around to feed her, change her or play with her.

Señora Gomez, a woman who lived in the house next door, heard Vanessa crying for quite a few days but was unsure of what was wrong. Finally, one day she decided to go over to make sure that everything was ok. Señora Gomez saw that none of the family cars were around. So she poked around for a little while until she found a window that had an old milk crate near by. She placed it directly under the window and used it as a stool. Señora Gomez saw the fourteen-month-old child sitting in a playpen unattended, and she immediately went home to call for help.

When the Rosa family drove down the street later that day, they saw a van from El Hogar Temporal, an orphanage nearby. As they got closer to the house, they saw that Vanessa was being carried out of the home in the arms of a nurse. Señora Rosa got out of her car and approached the nurse carrying Vanessa.

"Qué pasa?" she asked in a high-pitched voice.

A social worker approached her with a stern look on her face. "Tenemos que traer este bebé al Hogar Temporal. Las condiciones de vida aquí son inadecuadas."

"Estoy de acuerdo, tómela, no está mía," Señora Rosa snapped back in a rude voice.⁷

She got her other two children out of the car and went into her house.

Within four months, Vanessa had grown very quiet and thin. She sat in a corner by herself, barely eating, not playing with the other children, and not allowing anyone to hold her.

But, one day the people at the orphanage got word from the courts that a parent had been located for Vanessa. They hoped that this would be good for her. The woman that had been found for Vanessa was named Pamela Greenway, and she was from a nice little city in Massachusetts, in the United States.

⁷ "What's going on?"

"We have to take this baby to El Hogar Temporal. The living conditions here are unacceptable."

"Fine with me. Take her, she isn't mine."

Ms Greenway would sometimes watch her neighbor's children play outside and knew that she wanted children of her own. She had been adopted when she was an infant and felt that adoption would be the best way for her to start a family. Many of her friends had adopted from other countries, and she chose to look internationally also. She contacted an adoption agency and filled out all of the necessary paperwork. When it was complete, she was told to wait, a child would be found for her soon.

It was a beautiful day in October of 1983 when Pam pulled up to her home in her old, golden Subaru. She slowly gathered all of her papers, purse and lunch bag, got out of her car, and proceeded up to the door of her apartment. She placed her papers on the chipping white banister of her porch, so she could take the mail out of the mailbox. This was the usual routine for Pam, and she slowly went through the day's mail, not knowing that it would bring her some exciting news.

"Bills, bills, bills, nothing but bills. Wait a minute..." She came across an unusual envelope from the adoption agency. She opened the envelope and inside it was a letter. As Pam's eyes slowly scanned across the paper in her hand, they grew wider, her smile grew bigger, and she gasped with excitement. A baby girl from Honduras had been located for her, and she would be notified when she could travel. With the letter was a picture of a small, skinny, dark-skinned baby girl with big brown eyes. This was Pam's new baby girl!

Riiiiiiiiing Riiiiiiiiing Riiiiiiiiing.

It was early on the morning of November 18th. Still dripping from her shower, Pam stood at the phone. Her face lit up with joy when the lawyer on the other end told her she was to leave for Honduras in one week.

She hung up the phone and started thinking of what she needed to do to prepare for her baby's arrival. Soon the spare room that had been filled with junk had a crib, a dresser and chair, books, dolls, toys, and clothes, anything a little girl's heart could desire. She spent hours on the phone talking to friends and family about her good news. She packed her clothes, shopped for gifts, and made her reservations. It had been a hectic week, but soon Pam was on her way to Honduras to bring home her baby, Vanessa.

She was very anxious on her flight to Honduras; she could barely sit still. The flight took off from Boston, made a connection in Philadelphia, then Miami, and finally landed in Tegucigalpa. The woman with whom Pam would be living during her visit greeted her at the airport. When she got to the house, she unpacked and relaxed. The next day would be a busy one.

"Beep beep beep beep."

Pam was awakened by the little white alarm clock that sat on the nightstand next to her bed. She jumped out of bed very excited on this beautiful, sunny morning of December 7th. This was the day she would first see the little girl she had so long been waiting for. What a morning it would be.

After her shower and breakfast, Pam was greeted by the social worker who would be handling the adoption. The two women got into a little blue car and were on their way to the orphanage. The social worker could tell that Pam was very nervous because she saw her tapping her fingers on her knee. She looked at the nervous mother-to-be with a comforting look in her eyes.

"Do not worry, Pam," she said in her Spanish accent. "Everything will be ok."

The car pulled up to the front of a small cement building with children playing in an enclosed space to its right. Above the door there was a sign that said, "El Hogar Temporal."

Pam and the social worker proceeded to the door, and Pam saw children pressing their little bodies up against a fence. They were looking at this strange woman as if she were a queen. When Pam saw their sad faces she thought to herself, "Oh, I wish I could take them all home with me."

When Pam entered the orphanage, she saw a beautiful, but sad, little girl. She was a tiny little thing, with big dark brown eyes, smooth brown skin, and straight brown silky hair. Pam had a smile that went from ear to ear as she squatted down to pick the baby up. Vanessa was frightened and would not look at Pam; instead, she turned her head away. But when the little girl finally looked at the woman who was holding her, their eyes met and it was clear to Pam that Vanessa was her daughter.

To that first visit, Pam brought with her a little red music box that played "Yankee Doodle," a doll, and a little pink and white dress.

Pam had to leave the orphanage that first day, but she promised Vanessa that she would be back. The next day she kept her promise, and in the days following, she made many trips back and forth to the orphanage. With each trip, she and Vanessa grew closer. When Pam came for her final visit after receiving permission from the courts to remove her little girl from the orphanage, there was Vanessa in a doorway wearing the pink and white dress. She had her red music box hanging from one wrist, her doll, Baby, held close to her, a yellow lollipop in hand, and a large smile across her face. She was ready to go home.

Pam brought Vanessa with her to the house she was staying in, and there she and Vanessa spent the remaining days in Honduras. Vanessa spent these days playing with the other children of the house, growing into a healthy, happy and plump baby. She was simply being a little girl.

A few weeks passed, and one morning when Pam and Vanessa returned from a doctor's visit, the papers that would make Vanessa legally Pam's daughter were awaiting her signature. Pam placed Vanessa in a chair next to hers, and sat down at the table. As she placed the pen to paper, she could see that her hand was shaking. She paused, glanced over at Vanessa, who was giggling and banging her toy keys on the table, took a deep breath, smiled, and started signing. When she was done, the little girl she had so long been waiting for was now hers.

The last few days in Honduras were spent saying good-bye to all of the people who had made Vanessa's adoption possible, and soon the day came for Pam and Vanessa to fly home to Boston, Massachusetts. There, family and close friends would be waiting anxiously for the arrival of Pam and her new baby. This flight to Boston was the first time Vanessa had been on an airplane. As she and her new Momma boarded the plane, her face was full with excitement.

The airline stewardess thought that she was the cutest thing ever and asked if she would like to visit the pilot in the cockpit. With her Momma's approval, Vanessa and the stewardess proceeded to the cockpit for a little tour. Then, the stewardess brought Vanessa back to her Momma in her seat where they had an uneventful trip home.

Pam's good friends and family watched Pam come off of the plane with a much healthier looking Vanessa in one arm and her orange and white bag, where she kept all of her paperwork, in the other. She could see them all waiting at the terminal with eyes wide open, smiles across their faces, and arms held open for the new baby. After much fuss over Vanessa, she and her Momma parted from everyone and were in the car heading for home.

As Pam was driving, she glanced back at Vanessa in her car seat, her face filled with amazement.

"Wights, Mommy, wights," Vanessa said in her high-pitched baby voice. She had seen all of the lights along the highway and made sure that her Momma knew. Vanessa had had a long day and was very sleepy.

Pam glanced to the back seat once more, this time to see her little girl sound asleep.

When Pam and Vanessa arrived home, Pam picked the sleeping child up out of her car seat and carried her into the house. She was greeted by one of her cats, Pandy. "We're home," Pam said quietly to the cat as she walked slowly up the stairs that creaked with each step she took. Pam opened the door to Vanessa's room, and walked over to the crib. Pandy was by her side, anxiously waiting to see what her mom had brought home. Pam slowly placed her peacefully sleeping baby into the crib.

It had been a long journey since the start of her adoption process, but it was finally complete. Pam stood next to the crib looking down at Vanessa. With only the light from the street coming through the window, she could see her baby sound asleep in her crib holding her doll close to her side. Pandy leaped up into the crib and sniffed around a bit. Once she knew that everything was ok, she curled up next to Vanessa's feet for her night's rest.

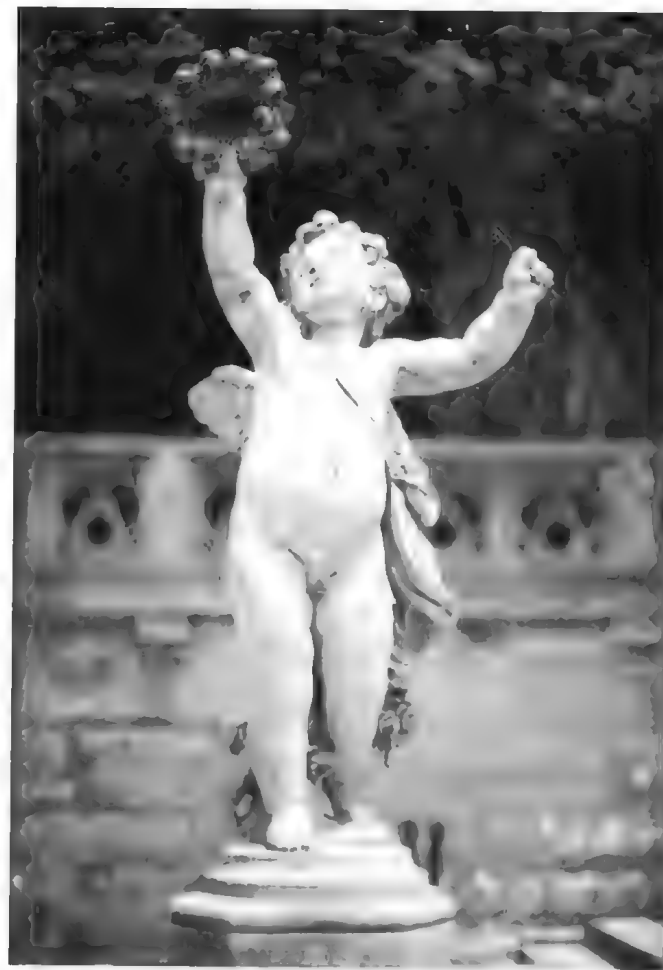
Pam could feel tears coming to her eyes. Her prayers had been answered. Hearing her child breathing and her cat purring, she knew that she finally had the beginning to her family. With one hand, Pam brushed Vanessa's brown, silky hair away from her face. She put a little blanket over Vanessa's tiny body and

slowly bent over the side of the crib, trying not to wake her daughter. She gave her a kiss on the forehead and said, "I will always love you, my little angel."

A Dedication

I would like to dedicate this story to my mom, Pamela Greenway Husted. You came and took me into your arms, and have given me unconditional love for the past seventeen years. If it weren't for you, I don't know where I'd be today. Thanks Mom. I love you!

Love, Karly



Stephanie Moskal



Erin Driscoll

Realization

by Kirstin Davidson

On most nights, by the time eleven p.m. rolled around, all my friends would meet at the movie theater and go out. Some of us would have just gotten out of work, while others would come in on their days off. We never had any idea what we would do on those nights. All we knew was that we would be together, and whatever we did would be exciting. We all saw to that.

Together all of us would leave the comfortable air conditioning of the ten-screen complex and sift out into the sticky summer night. We'd pile into cars and make the same familiar drive to a beach in Watch Hill, Rhode Island, which we referred to as "the wall."

The wall was private property, so we would have to park in a public lot and walk. The path leading to the beach had shrubs and trees on either side, blocking out the moon, making it hard to see two feet in front of you.

I loved these nights. Since going away to college, I have realized a few things about the people I had surrounded myself with in high school. The main thing was that I didn't particularly like any of them. I had become friends with them only because I was afraid of being alone. There were more than a few instances when friends of mine would betray my trust completely, and I would still spend time with them. It wasn't blindly. I knew well what they had done, but the fear of being alone was excruciating. I thought it would be worse to have no one than to have someone who didn't deserve my friendship. I told myself a lot of lies.

College taught me a lot about people. I was forced to start over with the impending idea of actually not making friends and being alone anyway. Of course, that didn't happen, and I met people that I actually enjoy. I joined theatre right away and found myself immersed in a production with interesting, beautiful people. Of course, I don't necessarily mean externally attractive. These wonderful people didn't care about what others thought, only what they themselves felt. It was okay to be me when I was with them. I'd never had that liberty before.

So, when I got home from my first year away at college, I was ready to make new friends based on shared interests and not just boredom or loneliness. Justin was one of those people. I had seen Justin around even before he started working with me. He joked often that he was the King of Westerly, Rhode Island, which meant that anyone who lived in the area knew him. Honestly, most of them did because he saw to it. He would drive around the small town, punk music screaming from the small speakers in his Dodge Neon. He lovingly referred to this car by its pet name, Francine, or by the term "punk rock Neon," named for all the band stickers plastered to the back bumper.

I realized right away that we were a lot alike. He loved movies and books,

but his real passion was music. Conversations with him were long and intelligent. Or sometimes, we would sit for hours in his little red car and talk about the most insane things, like cartoons or the letter Q. Even these subjects seemed profound.

On this particular night out, he was especially quiet, something extremely rare. He hung back and walked with me, a terminally slow walker. I wasn't particularly up that night either. I had been coming close to a nasty decision I had to make but didn't want to. The quiet from him only seemed to amplify the argument in my head. Still, even then I wasn't ready to discuss it or even consider it.

The ocean was especially rough that night, and the sky was so gray that you could barely tell where it ended and where the ocean began. I stared at it so long that my mind itself seemed to flip.

It's usually empty by the wall at night. My friends did crazy things like play wiffle baseball up and down the beach. Robert even went into the ocean, fully clothed, before scrambling up the rocks and perching there. Throughout all of this, Justin and I hung back, not talking.

After only about a half an hour of sitting silently amongst the insane, Justin stood up and asked me to take a walk with him to the end of the wall. As scared as I am of heights and of the narrowness of the wall, I still got up and walked with him. I don't know what it was I wanted, following him. That isn't exactly the point. There were no romantic moments, and this wasn't a profound experience because we're together now; we aren't.

We walked in silence until we reached the end of the wall. There we sat for a moment, watching the waves pelt the rocks. Maybe it was just being away from everyone else, but he cheered up and began talking about a movie we both liked a lot. The topics continued on a cheery level for a while, but at some point in the conversation, Justin began to voice how unhappy he was. He was going into his fifth year in college and had no idea what he'd do when he graduated that spring. He was scared, maybe for the first time in his life.

As I listened to him talk, I realized a few things as well. I had been struggling with the idea that I wouldn't be able to continue in college. It was mostly a financial problem, but also one of restlessness. I wasn't completely content with what I was doing at school. I liked the college I was going to, but I also knew it wasn't the right place for me. Maybe college wasn't the right place in general. All my life I had dreamed of going away, far away, to school. There was always some other reason besides the simple notion of getting an education. Whether it was my mother's hopeful expectations, my stepfather's tirades, or even just the loneliness, I was trying to escape something.

We talked for what seemed like hours about fear and living life the way you wanted to live it. I purged everything I had held inside for so long, and Justin listened in silence. When I was through, we returned to the rest of our friends

as though nothing important had been shared on those cold rocks looking out towards Block Island.

On the way back from the beach that night, it was almost as if our conversation hadn't existed. Our friends snickered to themselves when we returned, all thinking that they knew what had happened. My best friend, Utopia, elbowed me with a grin on her face that asked the question for her: Did you guys finally hook up? We didn't try to deny anything for fear we might have to explain what had really happened. I rode back with him alone, his pseudo-punk music blaring in the background. And when I left his car and went home, I wasn't worried about anything.

Justin helped me to realize that I was going to be as hopeless and unhappy as he was if I continued in the direction I was headed in. He had been in school for five years and was still as aimless as when he started. Of course I'm scared about what to do with myself after this year is over. But that fear is far easier to deal with now than if I wait until I have a degree I don't want or can't use. Maybe someday I'll go back and finish school, or maybe I won't. I really have no idea at this point. But, I do know that this is the right decision and possibly one of the most important ones I'll ever make.

Intelligent Input?

by Jim Mara

So transparent, you're blinding
Fingered before you're ever committed the crime
Your mouth, a piercing air horn
Your voice, nails on a chalkboard
My ears, abused children
Low self-esteem emanates as you crave accolades
The mock approval satiates, as the sea of ignorance glares with
semi-conscious amazement
Pseudo intellectuals are cowards, dude
They prey on the mentally weak to compensate for their own insecurities
Thesauruses are in abundance
"Word of the day" mailing lists aren't unique
Poetic diction is just laziness in disguise
We're all in this together, buddy
You have nothing to prove here
Pleasant surprises aid us through our days
I get it already
The fat girl at the school dance
The loser teen who gains credibility for drinking and smoking
We were all Carrie at one point or another, friend
Just try to calm down and relax
There are no superstars in ensemble casts, no leads in this school play
The shy have something to say as well, they just aren't as ostentatious
Follow Al Gore's lead, my good man
Nobody looks forward to a season with a ball-hog
Unrest is brewing and your co-conspirator only expedites your demise
Neglect, anger, backlash, revolution
Then all your Greenwich words are wasted on hollow ears
And I wouldn't want such high art to go unrecognized
Besides, haven't you ever heard Holmes, Holmes?
'Tis better to remain silent and be thought a fool, than to open your mouth
and remove all doubt.

A Table Full of Memories

by Lawrel Strauch

The wind blew hard and strong against my face as I stood and looked out at the mad ocean that was hurling itself against the once-peaceful beach. I sat down on the deck, and hung my feet into my grandmother's beach roses. As I raised my face in the direction of the sky, the wind whipped through my hair. Dark clouds were moving fast across the horizon. Closing my eyes, I thought about what my uncle had said the previous day. It was coming, and there was nothing anyone could do about it. Everything could go. Don't worry, but don't get your hopes up either. My grandfather came out on the deck in an attempt to take down the flag that was whipping furiously in the wind, but with no luck, all the while trying to carry on a conversation with someone in the house. I listened to the majority of my family inside the cottage slamming drawers and cabinets, packing up what would fit in boxes. I thought of all the memories I had managed to pack away here on Point Sable Island.

The first memory that floated into my head was from when I was six years old. My cousins and I had spent hours on the beach in front of the cottage. We built immaculate castles in the sand, then ran to the shore after buckets of water to fill in the moats. In the afternoons we would eat our lunches of peanut butter and fluff with just the right amount of sand, leaving an unforgettable crunchy taste. I thought about those sandwiches and how they always tasted better at the island. Then in the afternoons we would blow up one of the numerous floatation devises stashed under the cottage and kick our way around the island. We were always careful to avoid the one section by the point, where we were convinced unknown things were lurking. I thought about the boat rides my uncle Rob had taken us on when we went up the canal and under the huge Sagamore and Bourne Bridges. I remembered the feeling of having to wear that extraordinarily uncomfortable orange lifejacket and how it would force your neck to stretch in such an unnatural way. I recalled the look on my mother and aunt's faces as we hung our arms off the side of the boat, giggling at how scared they were. I thought about that feeling in my stomach when the boat sped over wakes and crashed down after them.

I thought about all the others on the island who had played such important roles in my memories. In addition to my cousins, there was my best friend, Joe, who was my age. That, of course, was before the summer that he decided he was perfect. He would constantly show off in front of whomever cared to watch. He was the typical jock, refusing to lose any game we ever played—flashlight tag, kickball, rowing, swimming, tubing, or diving. He had to be the best. Later, he would become my first boyfriend. I smiled thinking about how much he had changed, and then on the contrary, how much he really hadn't. John was a few years younger and had a little brother named Danny. My cousin, Heather, and John were best friends when he wasn't too busy trying to show up Joe. He somehow always managed to get himself into trouble one way or another and to drag the rest of us in afterwards. Danny was the tagalong of the group that, somehow

on a daily basis, we would manage to make cry. I thought of Anthony. He had the largest house on the island and made sure we knew it. He was four years older than Joe and I, and he was always a tease. His idea of flirting was most always physical violence though. I smiled remembering, once again, how I had been picked up by my feet and hung there until I would tell him what he wanted to know, or say where I had hidden his belongings, or until he had gotten bored and spun me around in circles for a while. Tough Love. Anthony owned the island's candy store, which he ran out of the back of his house. I don't think any of us had ever paid him. I thought of the coffee can with those numerous IOU's.

I thought about the countless things we did as a group, like the time when I was ten, and we convinced our parents that we should be allowed to stay out past nine. We had been sitting on the pier watching the sun set one night. The tide was low but coming in. The boys were showing off their manly abilities by hanging off the pier and pulling themselves back up. Heather, even as an eight year old, was all for woman's equality. She hung herself off the railing and immediately realized she wasn't going to get back up. She started giggling, then screaming. I tried hard to remember why none of us even attempted to help her. I smiled, then laughed, thinking of how she fell eight feet into the mid-tide muck. And all we could do was point and laugh as we tried to gain composure. It was that horrible kind of laughter that hurts your stomach and makes tears run down your face. She had actually fallen off the pier. She struggled to climb into someone's boat docked below. She was soaked to the skin in jeans and a sweatshirt, swearing she was never going to speak with any of us again.

I thought of the times on the swim raft when the boys would dive off and go under until almost too much time had gone by, only to shoot up out of breath, with hands full of the worst smelling stuff imaginable. I thought about that mud on the bottom of the Cape Cod Canal and how it smelled, like bluefish and low tide. They invented the "Mud Game" when they realized that if you whip handfuls of the stuff at the girls, they will scream and get mad. I remembered when we used to bring sand buckets and dive down to retrieve the putrid smelling stuff, in full fledged wars—girls versus guys. There was a certain bliss in being completely covered in the repulsive essence of filth and seeing your friends in the same attire.

I thought about the summer when I realized we were growing up. When Joe and I were fourteen, he began running the candy store, as Anthony was working a nine-to-five job to prepare for college. Joe also became the one who was picking up the little kids and hanging them by their feet. We were allowed on the swim raft without adult supervision. We operated the boats by ourselves. Our curfew was extended to 11:00. We stopped playing flashlight tag at night and instead took the boat over to the mainland. We all started dating, not surprisingly, each other.

I remembered the annual 4th of July clambakes and barbecues. Everyone who owned a cottage or property was down on that weekend. We had volley-

ball games going on and water wars. All the while you could smell lobsters and clams and all kinds of delicious things cooking from all over the island, mixing together in a mouth-watering scent. Everyone was always happy on that weekend. I thought about the sounds of cheerful conversation, the outbursts of laughter, the little kids giggling, and the content look on everyone's faces. I thought about how after dinner, everyone migrated to their beaches or decks to get a good spot for the fireworks. We always grabbed a blanket, then crowded down on our beach and lay back to watch the fireworks light up Point Sable Bay. I reminisced about the sounds the little kids made when the first one went off, and the sounds from over at Anthony's coming from his college buddies who had definitely partied too much. After the fireworks, we would all go back to the playground for the bon-fire. I felt the fun in the air as I thought of us lighting up our sparklers and enjoying the aura of friendship, love and summertime fun.

I thought of the little things, things that I had always hated or taken for granted, but could never lose—the long drive down in the car in the summer, the traffic on the highway, the first sight of the Sagamore Bridge and the "Welcome to Cape Cod" sign. I thought about the foghorn-like sound that emerged from the pipes when you turned the shower on, the feel of beach grass and sand on your bare feet, the smell of lobster cooking, those wonderful invisible splinters in your feet from the boardwalk, the lagoon, the sand dunes and those rainy days when there was nothing to do but play card games for hours. I remembered flashlight-tag hiding spots, the sound of waking up to seagulls, seaweed, the taste of salt water, the complete feeling of relaxation when you set foot on the pier, and sunsets on the deck. I smiled thinking of washing the dishes with the guys, boat rides on the canal, the swings at the playground, the picnic table...the picnic table! It hit me then as I opened my eyes, suddenly jolted back to reality. A picnic table had sat in our playground for at least ten years. Over that time it had been covered completely with engravings. It had every girlfriend my older cousins had been with neatly scratched into it, along with Anthony and older generations. All of the memories that I had revisited were marked and recorded on that singular piece of wood. I jumped up, feeling the wind that had picked up and the rain beginning to fall. I looked out on the beach to see Joe and John up to their knees in the chilly water bringing in one of the boats. I passed through the kitchen where my family members were still frantically running around, packing things and discussing hurricanes of the past. I grabbed my jacket and as I emerged, my cousins joined me on the porch, carrying boxes covered in trash bags. I told them about the picnic table and how we'd have to move it somewhere, or it would surely be destroyed. The thought hit them as it had me. We ran down to the beach as the boys met us with sullen faces. They completely agreed, and as we moved towards the playground, the dark threatening skies that had just been misting opened up upon us. We ran toward the playground against a wind that didn't want to allow us to complete our mission. I could hear my aunt screaming at us to get back, so we could leave. For the first time in a few days, we were laughing again, looking at each other

fighting the wind, and soaked by the rain with the impending threat of a powerful hurricane trying to take it all away. We made it to the playground and then realized how big the table actually was. It was twice as long as a normal table and twice as heavy. The swings, which no one had had time to take down, tangled together as the see-saw banged against the ground and a river of water poured down the slide. We had to scream at each other to be heard as we tried to lift the hefty table and turn it over. I looked at each one of my close friends' faces, dripping wet but beaming with smiles as we looked around for some way to get the thing over. Anthony came out on his porch, boxes in hand, and caught sight of us trying to flip the beast and ran out to help. Other islanders were retreating towards the pier and shaking their heads at us and shouting to get off now or we'd be stuck here. Some stopped to help. They were all older than the majority of us, but their names still jumped out at me as we struggled. Finally, we managed to fight the wind and twist it over. We quickly placed bricks and blocks over it, feeling the table was comfortably safe. Anyone else who had looked at that table would have seen a graffiti-covered mess not worth saving. But, to this group of soaked, out-of-breath, grinning people standing around me, we were saving memories. We laughed and joked about little things scratched into the now wet wood and counted all the different girls Anthony had managed to scar her sides with. Suddenly Joe, who was known for his speed, pulled his jackknife out from his jacket, whipping in the wind, and knelt down. We watched as he added yet another laceration to our sacred war-hero table. I smiled when he stood and we read what he wrote. "I survived Hurricane Grace." Quickly we all grabbed nails and lobster picks and added our names, as we had done so many times before.

Our parents, lugging boxes, demanded that we head toward the boats. We ran together to the pier. Even though I was dripping wet, I wasn't cold or uncomfortable. I knew a lot of things were going to change as I looked at the island defending itself against the now raging storm. But I also knew that some things would never change. The wind and rain could wash and rip away houses and boats and even picnic tables, but the memories we had created were what would survive. It was the best I've ever felt as I hugged each of my closest friends goodbye, somehow knowing it wasn't for good.

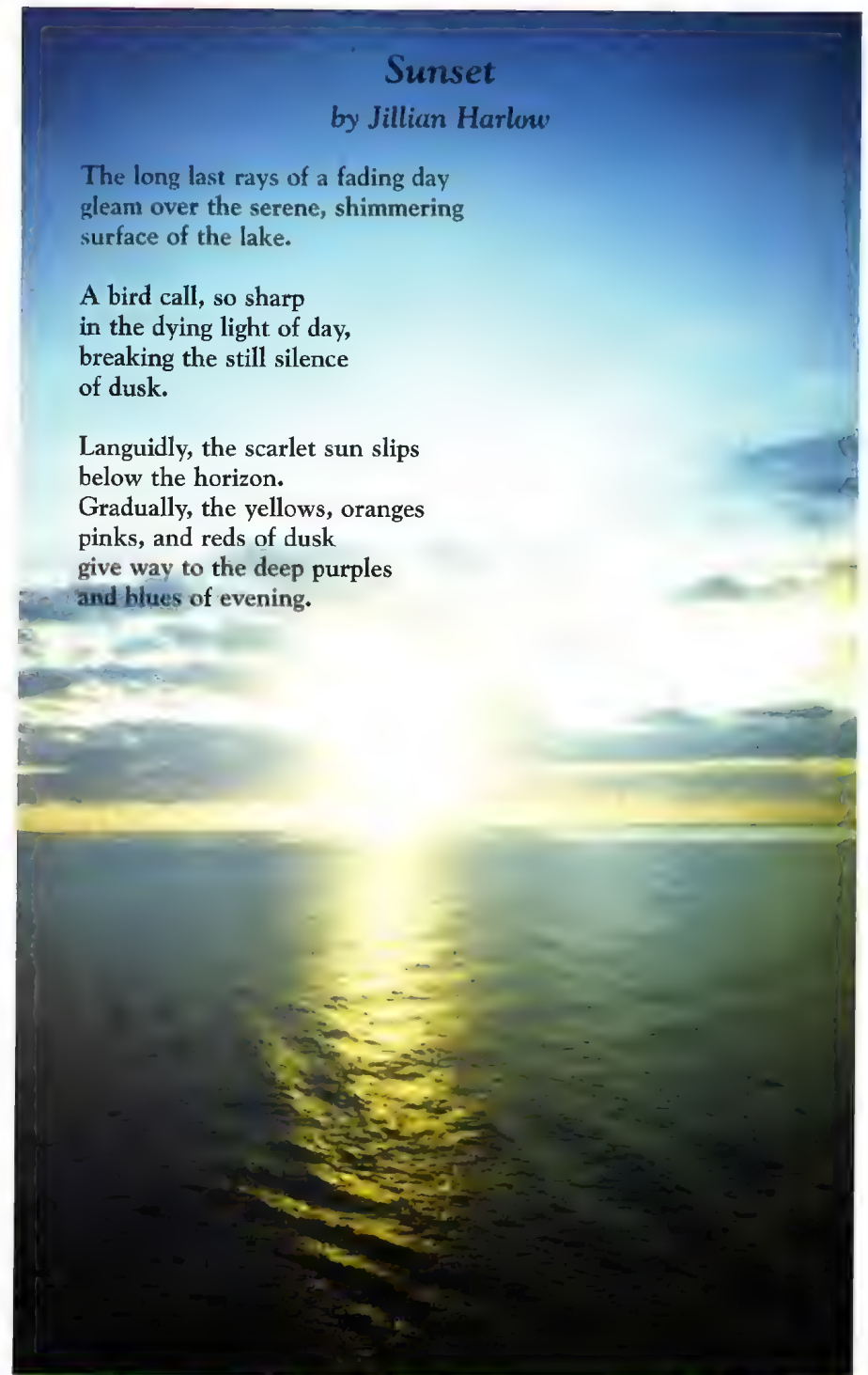
Sunset

by Jillian Harlow

The long last rays of a fading day
gleam over the serene, shimmering
surface of the lake.

A bird call, so sharp
in the dying light of day,
breaking the still silence
of dusk.

Languidly, the scarlet sun slips
below the horizon.
Gradually, the yellows, oranges
pinks, and reds of dusk
give way to the deep purples
and blues of evening.



Stephanie Moskal

Thinking of Time

by Mercedes Munson

Thinking of time
Time
Changed through seasons
The cold is coming **slow**, yet **persistent**
Persistent like the bees trying to **get the last pollen** off the dying flowers
Bring it to the queen
Queen
Lying in a **bed** of the last **summer's** flowers
Still succulent **and pure**
Dreaming of change
Time
Where
Where is the peace
All people recognize.

Disabled

by Marcelo Drakeford

Not understanding is what makes us creative.

Not knowing is what makes us discover.

Finding the answer gives us experience.

Teaching others fulfils our imperfections.

Sharing our ideas educates generations.

Knowing the truth takes us back to the beginning.

The Debate

by Paul J. Lawlor

And then	But you still think some girl is what you want?
I say,	
Stop.	Bitter language from me.
Watch near the road	Over there is a timeless dream.
my friend.	In the car, drive all pedal, music like sweat.
Together we stare a moment, as of some will, At the shine.	Our fast trip is never essential.

Alana Marinello



The Last Tear

by Doug Pettit

The drone of the C-130 seemed comforting as the warrior sat in a nylon troop seat awaiting his orders. The Forward Air Controller was pensive yet not frightened. He was relaxed but not at ease. He was numb, but not unfeeling, and sat there. Every fiber of his being was trying to recall every detail of the sixteen weeks he had spent at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. He recalled every lesson he had learned in map reading and land navigation. He rehearsed, in his mind, every detail of strategic parachute jumping. The Spartan was confident of his ability. He had earned his wings.

The videotape of his mind fast-forwarded to the briefing in Saigon. Although this was the first combat mission the twenty-one-year-old jumper had flown, it was by far, the most strategically important and the most psychologically profound.

The alarm bell rang, and two very professional fire teams leapt to their feet. Ten men were poised at the open door, watching for the light to change from red to green. The green light came. Ten manned parachutes began a free descent. The altimeters had been set to deploy the canopies at two thousand feet. In the dank shroud of darkness, ten parachutes silently obeyed their altimeter's command.

The fighter looked downward. Beneath his boots was a nebulous pit of clouds and darkness. The undercast and darkness quickly became the warrior's shield; it was a two-faced friend, hiding the two teams from enemy sight. It hid the ground from the jumper's keen eyes and anxious feet. Before he could agonize over his blindness, the cloud opened her mouth and exposed her terra-firma throat. The flyer's boots introduced themselves anew to Southeast Asian soil. Although friends, they made for unwilling bed partners.

Ten men assembled. The master sergeant barked out his silent orders. Two teams, less one man each, entered the stage to act out the well-rehearsed drama. Each of the eight men, sans weaponry save pistol and knife, set out to place his transponder. The warrior knew that his particular part of the mission was intended to be covert. To effect self-discipline, he removed the magazine from his beloved nine-millimeter Bereta. From that point on, firing his weapon would have to be a deliberate, pre-planned act. He kept the loaded eight-round magazine in his breast pocket. One round was chambered to protect the mission's secrecy. He was taught that even in failure, compromise was no option. The Spartan airman low-crawled across an expanse of real estate that separated him from his objective.

The jungle never sleeps. The fighter stopped, and like a tourist gazing at a foreign landmark, he drank in his strange, new surroundings. To this point, the mission was playing out with no resistance. He didn't think that stopping to

appreciate the jungle's abstract beauty would be harmful. He could hear the comedy of unseen primates, struggling in their sleep. With a surprise of horror, he realized that Cobras could be nocturnal. The rain forest was alive, yet over the canopy, death loomed. As the driven airman continued his advance, he reasoned that it was taking too long. No matter—the return trip would simply have to be an express, instead of a local. On he crawled.

The transponder was placed and activated. The young hero began his return trek. He was anticipating seven other familiar and successful smiles being handed to the reposed leaders. Suddenly, all the training concerning sound and light discipline became gold. An Asian soldier, just scant feet ahead of the airman, lit a cigarette.

The young airman was determined to make the roar of F-4 aircraft and the explosive light of napalm the enemy's first surprise. He waited until his North Vietnamese counter part finished enjoying his smoke. The glow of a short cigarette evolved into a new, longer one. Still, the airman waited. The North Vietnamese soldier seemed preoccupied with some sort of verbal presentation. He seemed to be arguing a point to an unseen compatriot. Still, the airman waited.

The soldier began to walk around erratically. The airman thought to himself that, if this man was a sentinel, then he was inviting his own and his site's demise. In fear of accidental discovery, the airman continued his epic wait. Soon the airman hero realized he had been stopped. An express turning into a local was one thing. Being stuck in traffic, however, was quite another! He did not want to experience or witness the hell that would shortly be coming from the sky. Drastic circumstances demand drastic measures. He must, at any cost, make his way back to the rendezvous point. Again, he thought of his friends directing air fire into the very plot of real estate he was now occupying. He did not want to be a fast-mover's statistic!

The North Vietnamese Army soldier seemed exhausted. He sat on the ground, with his back to the American Airman. The controller undressed his Kabar and stealthily crawled toward his adversary. Airman Spartan had been taught that North Vietnamese helmets did not have safety-release straps, as do the American variety. To avoid being blinded, he removed his beret and stowed it in his shirt. The airman prepared himself for the unknown. He made his move. The airman was confident that his razor sharp friend would execute any command he gave.

Adrenalin flowed as the American pulled back the front of his enemy's helmet, exposing his throat. Durrundal severed jugular vein, carotid artery, esophagus and wind pipe. It did not retreat until the savage airman felt spinal bone beneath his blade. The exposed anatomy sprayed a cloud of crimson into the air. The American was spray-painted with his enemy's blood.

The airman abandoned all reason. He broke into a run that did not stop until he reached his friends. He stood in the midst of his fellow controllers, with his blade still exposed, sweating profusely and dripping with saline-diluted

blood. The only protected article of clothing was his beret, which to this day he will not wear and is even loathe to look upon.

The American hero had been reduced to a prenatal fetus. He sobbed uncontrollably. Though he had not eaten for sixteen hours, he violently regurgitated. The **harder he tried to act like a man, the more the child within took control.** His **friends did not know how to respond to the sobbing infant.** **They just stared.** Master Sergeant David Webb took **control.** The veteran warrior **shoved the spectators aside.** He ordered them to **get out** of the stumbling hero's sight. Sergeant Webb hugged the child, as a father would embrace his son. He then gave his last order.

"Cry, son. Cry. Get 'em off ya. It's over, now." At those words, an enemy AK-47 emptied its load into David Webb and the airman. The respondent loaded his nine-millimeter and emptied it in the general direction of the AK's report. A very quick fire fight followed. The American Forward Air Controller grew up that day. Despite the pain of enemy lead in his leg, he carried Sergeant Webb to the rescuing helicopter.

Higher Headquarters reported the mission as a success. One very important enemy site was neutralized. The cost was one brave Master Sergeant. A very young airman learned the sanctity of life. Though he took twenty-six more lives, none were easy. All were like the first. The added cost of that first successful mission was one brave airman becoming a man.

Six weeks later, the airman, now a sergeant, was transported from a hospital in Sydney, Australia. His Commander met him in South Carolina. Sergeant brave man finally inhaled the American air that he had so earnestly missed. The Southeast Asian ghosts that were haunting him made his mind into a carnival haunted house. His newly awarded Bronze Star was dull compared to David Webb's stellar career. The Air Force Commendation award that his commander awarded him seemed so trite a title. The Presidential Unit Citation was an enigma. Why was Sergeant Webb not there to be a part of the heroic team? Did the President really know what he had awarded to whom, and why he had done it? The only award the sergeant could identify with was this first of three Purple Hearts. A scant six weeks after the "successful mission one," the hero felt as though his life's blood had not yet returned. In true Air Force tradition, the Forward Air Controller had received orders to return to his South Carolinian base. His new orders seemed fueled with vain accolades. His renewed duty status led our hero to more successful missions.

In the spring of 1987, while cherry blossoms decorated our Nation's Capitol, the United States Air Force Veteran left those medals and his final military tears at the black wall, beneath David Webb's name. The American hero is fine today, but on that day, as Master Sergeant Webb had been eighteen years earlier, he had to be carried away from the wall.

The veteran's sister still cherishes his bloodless Maroon Beret and the blade that, that day, kept her little brother alive.

There Is No Reason

by Dina Dworetsky

There is no reason why things happen in life. People are born and die every day. Some people are lucky enough to live until they are one hundred years old, while others live only to a young age. These are the ones we wonder about. What would they have been like when they got older? Where would they have lived? What would their jobs have been like, their families' lives, and all the other things we wonder about in their futures? Things were normal for the students at Curry College until one night recently when life changed eternally.

It was a cold Saturday night in February and everything seemed normal. The students were having a good time hanging out in the dorms, listening to music, watching television, playing video games, just catching up on the past week of school. It was your typical Saturday night at Curry College in Milton, Massachusetts. Life seemed perfect. Nobody will ever understand why things change, but they do. On this Saturday night, life changed for all of us.

Four of my friends decided to take a late night drive to the Mobil gas station down the street from school because they were hungry and wanted something to eat. They were listening to music, talking, and having a grand time. Then it changed. Life changed, our world changed. There was an accident, and I am still having trouble comprehending it. Although there was no alcohol or drugs involved in this tragedy, it still occurred. These four students were taken from Earth. They have been put in a world none of us know about yet. But there was one survivor, and I believe there is a reason for him remaining here on Earth. He was left here to help the ones who lost loved ones in the accident.

We will never know why he was left, and not somebody else. It is a question of faith. The pain that he has will eventually heal, but very slowly. This person isn't only a survivor, but a hero to all. This young person walked away from the accident with four stitches in his forehead. He's the hero because he punched out the back window of the car, then called 911 and his friend's room, which everyone had been hanging out in earlier that night.

That weekend I had gone skiing with my family in Maine. It was a quiet weekend. I was just enjoying their company because I hadn't seen them since Christmas break. When I arrived back, campus seemed empty. There were no cars in the parking lot, and everyone I saw seemed sad or upset.

When I got the awful news of the accident, I was confused about what had happened on Saturday night. It turned out that two people I knew fairly well had been taken. I didn't know why and nobody had an answer to this tragedy. So, I went for a walk to clear my mind and try to figure out what was happening. As I walked in the parking lot behind the Levin Library, my friends who had spent Saturday night in the hospital drove by and stopped. When they rolled down the windows of their cars, I looked into their faces and I saw weak-

ness in their eyes. They hadn't slept during the night because they had been waiting for news of our friends who we will never see nor hear from again.

I don't know when the school or the dorms will be back to normal. We who knew them feel lost, but we must continue our lives. Even though they are no longer with us, we must celebrate their memories forever and carry on with life.

The Sunday night after the accident, the school came together at a ceremony that was held in front of the Mayflower dorm on the dry side of campus. I looked into the eyes of friends who had spent the entire night in the hospital, and I saw pain like I had never seen before. It was pain of terror, fear, and sadness that was swept across their young faces. As I stood in front of the parking lot, I looked around to see faces that I had never once seen before, as well as faces I will remember forever. Everybody was standing in a circle and holding candles, and there wasn't a dry eye. They weren't just tears of sadness, but tears of lost souls that had lived every day as teenagers with no fear inside of them. I will never forget this night or this weekend. Not only the pain that we all carry with us, but also the memories that we can share will never be forgotten.

In the weeks since this tragedy, I've been reevaluating my young life. We must take every day and live it to its fullest. We must tell people how we feel about them even if it hurts because we might not get that second chance to tell them three little words. *I love you*. These are words that everyone must hear, and words that must be said. We must also remember the good times that we have shared with the ones we love. These memories will be with us forever.

~ Notes ~

~ Curry Arts Journal ~

DEDICATION

In Loving Memory of:

Billy Curtis

Jeremy Baratka

Jordan Vogel